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TWILIGHT THOUGHTS

M. S. CLAUDE

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FROM

Col. T. W. Higginson,
of Cambridge.

10 April, 1893.

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"Twilight Thoughts." *

MATTHEW ARNOLD writes a preface to the American edition of 'Twilight Thoughts: Stories for Children and Child-Lovers,' br Mary S. Claude, telling us that they carry him back to the Westmoreland of long ago, and are replete with nature and humor and pathos and morality and various other good things, and suggesting that it would be well for America to possess and read them. All of which is very kind in Mr. Arnold; but one cannot help wishing that, instead of this pretty bit of sentimentalizing, he had used his prefatory page in acquainting us with the personality of the author. Who is (or was) this gentle spirit, this rare genius, so intimate with flowers and fields and streams and birds, who knows their language, has read all their secrets, and entertains us so charmingly with her pleasant fancies? To her the outer world is full of significance, and all nature, animate and inanimate, speaks in voices of which she is fit interpreter. The thistle-seed, sailing joyously away in the fair blue summer sky, bears messages of hope and cheer to many a desponding heart,—the bramble delights a merry little girl with its quaint story of the complaining pebbles, —the bird of the green island, caged and blinded, sings a song of patient endurance,—the pathetic tale of the fettered mountain brook is but a reflex of human limitations and disappointments,—while the board with its 'Notice to Trespassers,' the plant in the old tool-house, the decorative flowers dreaming through the July night in the village church, the unseasonable winter daisy, are rich in material for this fertile imagination. Not so much for 'children and child-lovers' (though such will take pleasure in the stories), as for souls imbued with a Wordsworthian tenderness for the simplest and humblest of created things, and appreciative of their mysterious meanings. These will join in the desire to know more of an author gifted with insight so uncommon and expression so graceful.

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TWILIGHT THOUGHTS

Stories for Children and Child-Lovers

BY

MARY S. CLAUDE

EDITED BY MARY L. AVERY, WITH A PREFACE BY

MATTHEW ARNOLD

BOSTON
PUBLISHED BY GINN & COMPANY
1887

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PREFACE.

HOW can I refuse a word of preface to these stories? They carry me back to the fells and rills of Westmoreland, to long-past days when Westmoreland was the Westmoreland of Wordsworth and Hartley Coleridge, and when the authoress of these stories moved in her youth and spirit and grace through that beautiful region, herself a vision worthy of it.

She was connected with Germany; and the soul of Northern Europe, of the Germany of Jean Paul Richter, of the Denmark of Hans Christian Andersen, is in her stories, lending to them its familiar treatment of nature, its facile attribution to animals and plants and pebbles and clouds, of the life and feelings of man. Many a stroke of playful humour, many a moral and deeply humane suggestion, she owes to this genius — inextricably allied in her, however, with the English sadness.

But it is the neighbour and hearer of Wordsworth who appears in such stories as the "Notice to Trespassers," "The Meadow," "The Stream"; of Wordsworth pleading against the invasion of the beautiful romance of nature by improvements, and of the liberty of the peasant and the child by encroachments. "I have no respect whatever for the Whigs," he said most truthfully to Crabb

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Robinson, "but I have a great deal of the Chartist in me." And just this Wordsworthian Chartism inspires the "Notice to Trespassers."

For me, however, the main charm of the stories is in the breath of Westmoreland which blows through them, in the touch which reminds one that there indeed they were born. The cold little new-born rill "creeping softly through the long, drooping moss among the pale and tiny flowers," then "sleeping in quiet pools while the wag-tail and the stone-chat flit restlessly from stone to stone, or a mountain lamb bleats piteously, afraid to ford the shallow wave," then reaching "the small grey cottages in the shadow of the sycamore, the hanging alders, the broad grey stepping-stones" — this is Westmoreland, rendered with what truth, with what beauty!

And so there is nature and fable and humour and pathos and morality and Chartism in these stories — something for every taste; and it is well that America, too, should possess them and read them. May they give pleasure there as they have given pleasure here; and may they not be suffered, as they have here, to become rare or to go out of print!

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

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TWILIGHT THOUGHTS.

THE THISTLE-SEED.

"LOOK, how the thistle-seeds fly!" cried the children. "Like little birds," said one. "With a hundred wings," cried another. "Do tell us about them," said a third. "But begin at the beginning," cried all.

So I began at the beginning.

The old Thistle grew in a large field not very far from the hedge, and a stiff, stately dame she was. She stood bolt upright, and held out her sharp prickles as a warning to all that came by not to approach too near. In truth she was very fearless and stout-hearted, and the only living thing she dreaded was an Ass. She would say, "Though he looks so stupid and harmless, he is more dangerous and mischievous than any other creature; he neither respects one's station nor one's prickles — I cannot endure those long gray ears."

The old Thistle was fond and proud of her children, but she was very particular about them. She did not approve of the rambling ways of the blue Vetches

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and white Bind-weed at all; to climb over hedges and cling to every shrub and tree they might meet, she thought extremely undignified, and the sign of a very bad education.

Her children were all dressed exactly alike, in little short purple petticoats, and kept together in the narrow green nursery at the top of the house. There they might enjoy the sunshine and see what was going on around; but as to dancing and playing with the leaves and flowers about them, that was quite out of the question.

"Only wait," the old Thistle said, — "only wait patiently till you are older, the sun will soon change your purple frocks into white silken wings, and then you may fly whither you will into the wide world."

So the children waited.

It was the very last day of July when the old Thistle told her children that next morning, at sunrise, they were to leave home; a neighborly Breeze had promised to call as he passed, and teach them to use their wings.

Was not this delightful news? All night the old Thistle stood as erect and stately as if she did not care a bit about parting with her children, but she did not sleep a wink. All night she listened sorrowfully to the crumbling of the nursery-walls; at sunrise the children would be free to use their new white wings.

With the first dawn the good Breeze was there, and when he had whispered a few words to the grave old Thistle, he showed the children how to unfold their wings. At first they were heavy and moist, and many of them never rose at all, but alighted

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quietly at their mother's feet, clinging to each other in the dewy grass; some flew a little way, and then got entangled in the hedge, and remained there; but one flew high, and higher still with the morning Breeze, and as the sun came fully out, and dried the silky wings, it sailed up joyously into the fair blue summer sky, over the field where the deserted nursery stood, past the village where the swallows looked out of their snug nests beneath the eaves, and sleepy-eyed children peeped from behind the blinds and saw the pretty Seed fly by.

When the sun grew hot the happy Thistle-seed sailed slowly over a field of ripening corn.

Thousands of white butterflies fluttered among the full ears of the corn, and the proud, rustling Corn whispered, "Why do you flutter so gayly, and spread your quivering wings, little Butterflies? We shall live and rejoice in the sunshine many a day, but you will all die to-night."

And the Butterflies closed their wings, all palpitating with fear and sorrow, and rested sadly on the corn.

But there were two that flew up high into the warm air, and sported merrily; their fair wings kissed each other as they flew, and they said, "We are together and glad, we have sunshine and flowers to-day — we are together and glad, though we die to-night."

That made the Thistle-seed feel lonely, and it flew away from the Butterflies and the rustling corn, and rested awhile on the leaf of an oak that grew by the roadside.

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In the shadow of the tree a man sat weeping, and a dead child lay at his side; but the man wept less for the dead than for the living, for his children were ragged and hungry, and he was a beggar, and could give them nothing, and the oak-tree was all their shelter from the sun and from the storm.

And when a bird settled on a branch of the oak, and shook the light Thistle-seed from the leaf, so that it floated free in the air, the man raised his weeping eyes, and it came into his mind that a bright little flower had faded in the nursery of the field ere the light and happy Seed winged its way to the blue sky; and the father looked more calmly on his faded child, more patiently on his living babes; and the Seed went on its way.

It was high noon when the Thistle-seed flew over a beautiful still lake. The wild-duck fed her brood among the reeds, and the white lilies floated near them; blue dragon-flies darted hither and thither, and now and then a leaping fish dimpled the surface of the water. The calm, clear, blue eye of the lake looked up to the clear, blue eye of heaven, as a placid babe might look up, lovingly reflecting a loving mother's gaze. The Thistle-seed could see its own tiny image pictured far beneath, and much it wondered to mark so light and frail a thing sailing in safety and alone through space. Fain would it have gone down to kiss the twin seed that floated so gracefully beneath; but when it heard the joyous twittering of the swallows overhead it bade farewell to the sunny lake, and, rising higher, flew far into the fields again, and past

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many a rose-bowered cottage-porch and gayly-planted garden.

In one of these a little group stood near the gate. A well-grown youth, with ruddy cheek and trustful child-like eye, ready to set out upon his journey, leaving his quiet home for the first time, held the lifted latch in his hand; his mother raised the bundle to his shoulder, and, laying her hand tenderly upon his uncovered head, once more bade him "Farewell, and God speed." A little sister clung to him, and cried most earnestly, "Do not leave us! What will you do without us all? — Who will take care of you, and show you the way in the wide, wide world? Stay with us, brother, — stay with us at home!"

Tears came into the boy's eyes when he saw his sister weep so bitterly, and his mother turn away lest he should see her weeping also. But stoutly he forced away the tears, and, kissing the little one's cheek hastily, he showed her the pretty white Thistle-seed floating along; and whilst the young child forgot her grief and looked up with a dawning smile, the boy gently disengaged himself, and closing the little gate behind him, turned once more to wave his hand to his mother, and point out the Seed to her also, with a deeper, holier meaning.

Away and away it flew from the eyes of the mother and the little tearful child to a neat court-yard, where a group of boys stood round a squirrel in a cage.

There was a wheel in the cage, and the wild squirrel went round and round in it continually, and the boys hung little bells to the wheel, that never ceased jangling, and their little sister stuck cabbage-roses

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and hollyhock flowers between the bars of the cage. The boys were very proud of the squirrel, and of the wheel, and the bells, and they showed their prisoner to their companions, and said that he liked the wheel and the tinkling of the bells, — "And the flowers," said the little girl. But the squirrel was sulky and angry if they tried to touch him, and bit their fingers in revenge.

Truly the poor squirrel was not tamed and not happy, but still he went round and round with jangling bells while the Thistle-seed flew by, and over the tops of high trees in the neighboring wood, where the squirrel had left his mate and the nest with his helpless young ones, and all his joy and his freedom, behind.

Now the wood was passed, and the Seed rose with the evening breeze over a green mountain; the hill-sheep cropped the short heath among the rocks, and the sweet grass of the mountain pasture, and in a quiet spot, sheltered and lonely, there sat One that mourned by a grass-grown grave. There was no stone to tell who it was that lay in that lone burial-place, no other memorial of the dead than the piled turf and the form of that silent steadfast mourner; the mountain lambs came fearlessly around, for the watcher was there daily and took no heed of them.

And the sun was set; the harebells on the hill-side slept, sheltered in tents of spreading fern; the lambs couched on the heather; the flowers on the grave-hill slept; the mourner only slept not, but marked with sad, attentive eyes, how the Thistle-seed, on weary

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wings, descended the mountain-side in the dim twilight. Cold bats flew here and there with sudden whirr, and the owls came out of secret haunts on heavy noiseless wings, hooting a wild "Good night," and the Thistle-seed sank down slowly into the dewy grass.

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THE CHILD AND THE FLOWERS.

A GENTLE Child lay sick for many weeks, and his mother watched him, and when he lifted up his head and smiled again at last, she saw that the sickness had spared his life, but taken away his hearing. And she and his father grieved for this, and nursed him the more tenderly day by day.

When the Child left his bed and the still sick-room, and hourly missed the sounds he had been wont to hear around him, he seldom spoke, and all his movements became very gentle, as if he lived in a great stillness, and feared to break it. But at times he would go apart from all and sit with inclined head and brightening eyes listening, as to most sweet music, and the nurses said, "The Angels are singing to him."

Most surely the deaf, the blind, the lame, have all their ministering Angels, or their lot upon the earth were too hard.

It would seem very sad that so young and frail a creature must live without hearing the words of love and endearment, which from parents' lips are the very breath of an infant's life; yet the pale, pensive Child knew that he was loved; he knew it when his moth-

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er's eyes filled with tears as he looked up into her face; he knew it when, folded to his father's breast, he felt the quicker throbbing of his heart in answer to his mute caress.

The deaf Child passed many hours alone, for he could no longer join his young playmates in their joyous games; he stood among them as a timid lamb might stand among frolicsome mountain kids; and so it came that he spent long lonely days in the woods and fields, and by the side of little streams. And so he learned to know and love the flowers and the bright insects of earth and air.

The Butterfly feared not to rest in his shadow and display its downy wings to his gentle eyes; the Lady-bird loved to creep on his white hand, ever patiently extended until it pleased her to unsheath her folded wings and fly away.

But the Child loved the flowers best. His delight in them was not the eager passing pleasure of possession shown by other children; no, he made them his friends, and communed with them tenderly — now kneeling in the grass to inhale their fragrance — now stooping to kiss the dew from the sweet petals — now gazing on them with such deep and earnest attention, that some who watched said they talked to him; and so indeed it was, for every flower has a voice; but it is for the heart, not the ear — for the secret heart of the loving listener only.

The Child never gathered flowers. He could not bear to see them fade suddenly from life and beauty to death and decay, unscreened and unsupported by the parent plant; and when he chanced to find the

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withering nosegays and long chains of daisies, left by other children in the fields, he gathered them up compassionately and hid them, that none might see them die.

The winter was a dreary time to the deaf Child, for then he had no flowers; and when the strangely-wreathed frost-flowers sparkled on the window-pane in the cold sunshine, he shuddered and turned away his face, for he saw that they were cold and silent, and that his warm breath changed them into trickling tears.

But when the spring came back, and the Primroses bloomed again, he said, "The woods are full of smiles;" and he went out, and among the countless numbers he chose one to be his favorite, and watched it daily, while the pale sweet buds unclosed, and one by one sank to sleep among the broad green leaves. "Next spring they will awake again," thought the Child; and then he mused long if they would indeed be the same fair blossoms, or others — fairer ones perchance.

When the Primroses passed away, it seemed to the Child they had sent the Violet and the Anemone, that he might not miss them too much.

As he looked into the dark eyes of the Violet, suffused with dew, he remembered his mother's eyes swimming in tears, and he was glad to stay and watch until the sun had dried the dew-drop, for it was to him a token of comfort for his mother's tears.

But the tender Anemone, that bends her head so meekly to the blast, closing her veined petals against the chilly rain, lest the precious seed be injured —

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the Anemone was his sister among the flowers. "We will always meet the storm thus, thou and I," said the Child's thoughts; "bending low before the blast, the chill rains of disappointment shall not destroy the precious seeds of hope that lie hidden in our breasts." And when the shower was over, the opening Anemone answered him with sweet and hopeful words.

In the long still summer evenings, the Child loved to sit by the clear brook and cool his hands and brow in the running water, and there he would seek the blue Forget-me-nots before all other flowers, for he saw that they were fair and blue as the blue sky above, and they appeared to him fairer and gentler even than the Anemone.

He asked them what made them so exceeding fair; and they said, "Our blossoms are of the hue of heaven, and that is love, and there is nothing fairer than love in all the earth."

And when the Child saw where a rude hand had thrown a stone upon the roots and stems of the Forget-me-nots, that they bowed themselves over it, and hid and crowned their oppressor with a graceful wreath of sky-blue flowers, he felt that they spoke the truth. "There is naught fairer than love," he repeated, and kissed the Forget-me-nots with a warmer kiss.

But if he left the brook with a happier heart, it ever made him sad in the short and glowing days of autumn to watch the late blooming of the proud and stately Foxglove.

One by one the lovely spotted bells fell away, leaving a slender naked finger pointing to the sky. And

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when he asked, "What means that pale thread pointing upwards, while the purple bloom sinks downward, beauteous in decay?" there was no answer, for the young enfolded blossoms knew not; and the hungry bee was busy in the full-blown blossoms, and they heeded not the Child's questionings; and the fallen bells and the upward finger had no words to interpret their symbols.

And the Child thought, "When I am older they will tell me." But, like the flowers he loved, his time was not to be long upon the earth.

When autumn damps succeeded to summer sunshine, his strength gradually failed, his cheek grew paler, and you could trace the veins upon his brow as plainly as in the petals of his sister-flower of the spring; and when all the flowers were gone he remained behind alone, the loveliest and the last.

It was on a clear cold day, late in the autumn, that the Child went out into the fields for the last time; a sharp north wind scattered the leaves from the brown oak, and lifted the long hair from the boy's forehead; a dying butterfly fell at his feet. The Child gazed on it long, and bowed his head, as if in calm and trustful assent; and so his mother found him, benumbed in every limb by the keen north wind, and, lifting him in her arms, she carried him to her chamber, there to warm and tend him.

The autumn was gone, and winter come, and still the mother nursed the declining Child; his strength failed daily, and his pale cheek grew paler still, his bright eye brighter, as the disease gained ground.

It was in the month of January that a change came

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over him once more; his cheek burned with a small red spot; he was restless and excited, as before he had been listless and languishing. He dreamed ever of flowers, — of red Roses, and of Lilies, and his blue Forget-me-nots, and sometimes of the proud Foxglove, that would not answer his most earnest questions.

His mother, seeing how his thoughts were with the flowers continually, brought Tulips and rich Hyacinths in glasses to his bedside; but the sick Child signed to her to take them away: they seemed to him imprisoned, as birds are imprisoned in their cages, and it pained him to see them. His mother wept as she took them away, and passing through the garden she saw where a little group of Snowdrops had bloomed in a sheltered spot; and she took them hastily and brought them to her Child.

He smiled when he saw them, and touched them with his faded lips as he took them from his mother's hand. She left him softly, and called his father to see him smile again; and when they came together to the bedside, they found him with his head sunk upon his breast, his dark hair fallen over the scattered Snowdrops, his small hands, white as the flowers, extended on the coverlid: the Snowdrops had soothed him to sleep.

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THE BRAMBLE'S STORY.

A MERRY little girl was one day running along as fast as she could with a basket of flowers in her hand. All at once something seized her frock so roughly behind that she nearly fell down. She pulled at her skirt, and pulled again, but still it was fast; so she looked round, half frightened, to see what it could be. A great Bramble, close by the path, held her fast by the tuck of her frock, and wouldn't let it go.

"Are you in a hurry?" said the Bramble. "I wish you would sit down a bit by me; it's very pleasant on the grass."

"Please leave loose of my frock," said the child, "or you'll tear the tuck, and I don't like sewing at all. There, that will do, thank you;" and she smoothed her frock under her, and sat down by the Bramble with her basket in her lap.

"But you must tell me a story, if I am to stay," said the little girl, as she began to twine her flowers into a garland; and the Bramble, after a flourish of her long arm, began, —

"When I am at my full height, I can see over that wall before us, and look at the lake beyond, with its quiet bays and pretty pebbly beach."

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The child jumped up, and cried, "Oh, I can see it too; how pretty it is!"

"Well," continued the Bramble, "on that little beach there are hundreds of pebbles, of all shapes and sizes; there they lie in summer and winter, all the year round, and there I suppose they lay years before I was born."

"How tiresome it must be!" said the little girl; and again she jumped up from the grass.

"Now do sit down," said the Bramble, and she pulled her by the pinafore. "Perhaps you think so," she went on; "you don't seem to like sitting still; but I think they might be content; they have variety enough in the weather and the seasons, — the blue sky in summer, the clouds as white as my blossoms floating over their heads, and then the rain, that makes them shine like jewels in the sun. Autumn, perhaps, is a dull time, when the fog hangs upon the trees and loosens the red leaves; but when Winter sets in, the frost is busy, and wherever there is the tiniest blade of grass or little weed growing he hangs them with crystals of the prettiest forms; he sings some old tune to the lake at night, and hushes it to sleep; and so it lies for days, cold and still, not a wave coming ashore to play; then down come the hailstones, — they claim cousinship with the pebbles, and a merry dance they lead among them, and over the sleepy lake."

"I like all that," said the little girl: "but why do you have wool hanging about you this warm weather?"

The Bramble looked vexed, for she knew she had

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stolen the wool; but she said, "Oh, the sheep leave it sometimes, when I've told them a story. But you shouldn't interrupt me."

"Well," said the child, "go on." So she did.

"There were once three Pebbles that were friends. They lived close together on the beach, and they were all discontented, and every day they said, 'Oh, why were we born Pebbles?'

"One of them had fallen in love with a Water Lily that lived in the lake; and every summer when she lifted up her head, and her white dress gleamed in the sunshine, he sighed, 'Oh, why was I born a Pebble? If I had wings, I would fly to my Lily.' And so he fretted and pined, but he did not grow much thinner on that account, for it is not in the nature of stones.

"The second Pebble did not care for the Lily at all; he had a passion for calculation, and thought he could distinguish himself in mathematics. He knew exactly how many Pebbles lived on the beach, and calculated how much cleverer he was than they all put together, and that amused him a little. 'If I could only meet with some clever person who understood my worth,' said he, 'I should certainly be taken to the village yonder, and might be of the greatest service in the schools.'

"The third Pebble knew nothing of love, still less about mathematics. He prided himself upon his shape and color; he was always saying, 'Why must I lie here among *common* Pebbles? I am sure, if I were but examined, I should prove a most valuable

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specimen for a museum; but no one comes here except the cattle.'

"So the three Pebbles complained to each other, and sometimes they grew rather cross and tired of each other's repinings and wishes. 'Oh, that I could fly to the Lily!' sighed the first. 'If she loved you, she would come over the lake to you,' said the mathematical Pebble, in a provoking way. 'Alas, that is impossible,' replied the disconsolate lover; 'do you not know that she has ties of the most sacred nature in her peaceful home, — it is impossible — she cannot break them — and were they broken, how could so refined a creature put up with the vulgarity of this stony multitude?'

"'I would I were on the first shelf of a great museum,' said the gay-colored Pebble again.

"'Hush!' said the first, 'don't you see something approaching? perhaps our time is come.' Then they all looked up eagerly, in spite of the mocking of their blunt neighbors, who never believed a word they told them about lucky Pebbles that had seen the world, and come to great honor and distinction.

"And so the time went on from year to year. At last, one fine summer afternoon (I remember I had just dressed my younger children in white), three little boys went down to the beach to play. They were rosy-cheeked, black-eyed little fellows, with clean pinafores, and straw hats all stuck over with burs, in patterns. And when the three friends saw them they whispered, 'At last!' and made sure they were princes or elves of some kind, because they looked so beautiful and happy. The other Pebbles

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heard their whisperings, and when the boys ran about the shore, and they saw their coarse pinafores and clumsy shoes, they laughed till they crunched and rattled again. After a while the boys sat down close by the three friends, and began to arrange the burs on their hats like crowns.

"'You see we are right,' whispered the three Pebbles all together. One of the boys looked down just then for a bur that had fallen, and cried out, 'See, what a capital duck-and-drake stone!' and he took it up and showed it to his brothers.

"'Duck-and-drake stone!' thought the Pebble, not very much pleased at the praise, for he was jealous of the graceful Swan that swam over the lake every evening to the sweet Lily's home.

"'I'll try it,' said the boy; so he got up and swung his arm, and away the Pebble flew—oh happiness!—bounding lightly over the clear water, kissing the blue waves many and many a time, reaching the White Lily's side at last.

"'He is happy,' said his friends; but the other Pebbles all declared that he was drowned.

"Meantime another of the boys was searching busily among the Pebbles, and he said, 'I've lost my slate-pencil, and I must find another to take to school to-morrow;' and presently he took up the mathematical Pebble, saying, 'Here's one that will do famously;' and he picked up a bit of slate and made a sum upon it, to find out how much less his new pencil would cost than the old one, and then put it in his pocket to take to school.

"The gay-colored Pebble was now the only one

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left, and not in the best of humors at being so long overlooked. When the boys were going away, the youngest of the three took him up, and tossed him high in the air without so much as looking at him first. Down he came at last into a garden, where a very little girl was walking with her doll; she couldn't think where the Pebble came from, and ran to pick it up; and when she saw how prettily it was marked and shaped, she said, 'I dare say it fell out of the sky, and it's a great curiosity.' That was a word she had learned from her brother, who was a big boy. The little girl carried the Pebble into the house, and got upon a stool to put it upon the marble chimney-piece, between a piece of spar and a bit of copper-ore. And the little girl and the Pebble thought it a great curiosity, and they didn't care what anybody else thought."

"Thank you," said the child; "I'll go now; but may I take some of the wool? it will do for a pin-cushion." The Bramble did not think that polite, but she said, "Yes." So the little girl picked off the wool and said, "I'll leave you my flowers instead."

The old Bramble did not like any flowers so well as her own white blossoms; but she said, "Very well, you may leave them, for they will bring the bees, and I shall have a chat with them when you are gone."

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THE WINTER DAISY.

IN the winter when the sun is cold, and the earth benumbed with frost, the field-flowers are asleep; they undress themselves of nearly all their leaves, and sleep until the spring comes again: but one cold January (I cannot tell you how it happened, but so it was), a little Daisy had so sweet and vivid a dream of sunshine and soft air, that, all unconscious of the season, it put forth a flower-bud.

It was noon when the bud unclosed; there it stood alone in the field; not another flower to be seen; not even a green leaf; the hawthorn hedge was as bare as possible, and the grass was faded and yellow, sleeping under the pure white snow that covered hill and vale for miles around.

The poor little Daisy was frightened at finding herself alone in the midst of the winter; she looked up at the pale sun that shone as it were through a veil of mist in the light blue sky; the air was so still too, it made her feel quite strange. No singing of birds overhead, no humming of bees, no chirping of merry grasshoppers, and yet she had heard them all in her dream; but only the complaining croak of the hungry raven passing by, and every now and then a plaintive wail from the ice of the little lake beyond the fields,

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that sounded dismally to the poor disenchanted Daisy.

The little flower was not very tall, but she could look around her over the snow, and when she saw the bright red breast of a robin at a very little distance, the sight quite gladdened her, and she said within herself, "Oh, if he would sing but one summer song, then I should have *something* left of my beautiful dream."

The robin hopped nearer and sang a few low notes, and wondrously they thrilled in the desolate floweret's heart; but it was very cold, and the bird was chilled, so that his song ceased, the film came over his clear, brown eye, his slender feet clung to the crisp snow — he was frozen to death; and the poor Daisy was quite alone again.

Her white petals were spread out around the tiny yellow flowerets, her green stalk was taper and downy, but still she did not look as the summer daisies do, for the cold had stunted her growth, and her leaflets were ragged and uneven, and the gold star within them was tarnished and spotted with black. The Daisy was too delicate to bear the winter's frost unharmed, and so she stood in silent grief and fear while the hours went slowly by.

When it was near the time of the early sunset, some children came through the field, and when they saw her they cried, "Look! what an ugly little short Daisy! A Daisy in winter! How ridiculous!" and then they all laughed and ran on.

The poor little Daisy was sadly hurt at this, and she wished they had rather trodden on her with their

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wooden clogs, than laughed her sorrow to scorn; and she said, "It will soon be night, the frost will bite me, and my leaflets will shrivel away, my stalk will snap in the bitter cold, and I shall die before the moon is up. Farewell, cold sun! farewell, desolate earth! farewell, my sweet, sweet, summer dream!"

So the little Daisy stood firmly waiting for the cold death, the sun was gone down, and she shuddered from head to foot in the foggy frost-air. The cattle were all housed; the rook and the raven sheltered for the night; the children had thrown away their snowballs, and ran in to the bright firesides. It was solemnly still in the white frozen field beneath the gray sky.

Then a languid step made the snow rustle lightly, and a girl came slowly by, and seeing the little Daisy in the snow, she stooped, and with a warm, ungloved hand, gathered the dying blossom, and laid it tenderly upon soft, breathing lips, that whispered, "Are we not sisters, thou and I, poor little dying flower? I also have had a dream of spring and life like thee; I also have been awakened by the winter." And the girl put the Daisy in her bosom and went away.

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THE "NOTICE TO TRESPASSERS."

A ROUGH, square piece of board once lay in the corner of a carpenter's shop, all covered with dust and cobwebs.

The little children in the streets sometimes came into the shop in winter, to play among the shavings and bits of wood upon the floor. Sometimes two or three sat down on the old gray-looking Board, and began to talk about the fields, and the trout-streams, and the nut-woods, about fine weather and holidays, and how much they liked to be out-of-doors.

The old Board listened to all this, until at last it had such a longing to get out of the dark corner to see the bright sun and the green fields, that it had no peace or comfort left. This went on all winter, and still the Board was lying in the dusty corner.

At last — it was one morning early in the spring — a man came into the carpenter's shop; he carried a stick in his hand, and looked very cross. This man spoke to the carpenter, but the Board could not hear all he said, because a boy was sawing with all his might close by.

Presently the carpenter came, and took the Board out of the corner, and wiped the dust off it, and then he said, —

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"I think this will do very well."

"Yes," said the cross-looking man; "be quick and get it planed, and then send it to the painter's, next door."

So the Board was laid upon a bench and planed, and it was soon done, for there were no knots in it; and then it was cut almost square, but not quite. It felt very proud of its nice smooth face, and was greatly pleased to be carried to the painter's shop.

The cross-looking man was there, and he had a piece of paper in his hand, and he said, —

"Be so good as to paint these words on the Board;" and he left the paper, and went away. Then the Board was painted with several coats of black paint, and the words in the paper were painted in white upon it; and in a few days the man came himself and took it away: he nailed it on a tall post, and carried it on his shoulder down the village-street, — right towards the fields with the trout-stream he went; how delighted the Board was at the very thought!

When the man had got over the first stile, he planted the post upright in the rich green grass, and then he went away.

The Board looked out upon the green fields, the sky was blue overhead, little birds were twittering in the hedges, and early flowers were out all around; the Board felt so happy, and said to itself, —

"Now, I dare say, the children will soon come; how pleased they will be to see me here! they will laugh, and sing, and dance round me; they will make chains of daisies, and hang them about me; and the

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boys will make me the 'home' in their wild games. I have not forgotten their talk of summer and play, in the dark old shop. I am very happy now, but I shall be even happier when the children come."

So the Board waited joyfully till some one should come.

After a while there were voices at the stile; a little girl came up, leading her blind grandfather by the hand; she stopped suddenly when she saw the Board, and said, —

"Oh, we can't go through the fields, grandfather!"

"Why not?" said the old man; "why can't we go through the fields to-day as well as yesterday? What are you afraid of, my little May? — Are there cattle in the field?"

"Oh, no, it is not that," said the child; "but there is a black Board put up, and it says we are not to walk in the fields any more." And then she tried to read the words on the Board, but some of them were long, and she couldn't make them out very well.

The old man listened to her very gravely; he did not seem angry, but he shook his white head, and said, —

"I have passed through these fields for many a long year; I played by the stream when I was a child like you, and now that I am blind I yet love to hear the water rippling over the stones, and to smell the fresh flowers in the grass. It is hard to be shut out now!"

The little girl made no answer, but held her blind grandfather's hand very tightly in hers, for she loved him dearly, and could not bear to see him grieved.

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You don't know how sorry the poor black Board was to see the silent pair turn slowly back to go home through the dusty lanes!

They were scarcely out of sight before a party of children came down from school, laughing and shouting most merrily. Some of them scrambled over the stile, and cried out they were going to play at ball; and one of the boys had a little boat to sail on the stream. The Board knew that curly-headed boy very well, and remembered how busy he had been making his boat in the carpenter's shop.

"I hope the boys won't mind me," said the Board to itself. "I hope they will have a good hour's play."

The Board quite forgot about its own pleasure; if the boys would only not look at it at all, it would be quite content.

The children had all got over the stile except one, and he was the biggest, and called out to the rest, —

"Look at that great ugly black Board, come to spoil our play! We're not to play in the fields any more, — if we do, we shall be *prosecuted*."

The children came back towards the stile to look at the Board; even the curly-headed boy came from the stream, and said sorrowfully, "I know who has done it; it's the cross man who has bought the fields: he came into the carpenter's shop and ordered a board to be planed and painted, and that's it. Oh, dear! he had better have left it in the dusty corner."

The poor Board thought so too.

"We may as well go out of the field at once," said the oldest boy; "for if the man sees us we shall be prosecuted."

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"What is it?" said the boy with the boat, — "What does it mean?" for he longed to go back to the stream.

"I can't tell you," said the other boy: "but I know it's something my father and brothers are afraid of, so we'll go at once." And he went, and all the rest followed him, and the one that was most vexed took up a stone and threw it at the Board. It did not hurt its wooden face much, but the poor Board was so grieved that it wished it had been split into chips before it ever left the carpenter's shop. It hoped nobody else would come that day, for the sky grew cloudy. A few drops of rain were already falling, when a woman came quickly to the stile, carrying a pale, delicate child in her arms; it clung to her, and let its head drop upon her shoulder; it had been very ill, and this was the first time it had been out in the air. The woman looked pale and weak, too, for she had nursed the little child in its illness, and she loved it so that she did not like to trust any one else to carry it.

"Take me home," said the little child, "I'm so tired."

"We shall soon get home over the fields, dear," said the woman, and she stopped a moment to wrap her own shawl about the child to shelter it from the rain. But when she looked up and saw the black Board, she turned away quickly from the stile, to go down the long, narrow lane instead; and the little weary child fretted and said, "I'm so tired, and now we sha'n't see any daisies:" and so it complained as they went down the lane, until it was out of hearing.

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This was worse for the poor Board than when the boy threw the stone: but what could it do?

"There can't be anything worse than that," said the poor Board to itself mournfully; "that's one comfort."

But a little after sunset, when the rain was over, a girl came slowly across the fields from the opposite side, towards the village.

She looked very odd, for she had no bonnet on, and all her hair was put off her face and twisted up at the back of her head; her cheeks were brown with the sun, and her feet and legs looked out from a very short full petticoat. She carried some little brooms in her hand, for she was a poor German child that wandered about the country singing, "Buy a broom," and every night she brought her few pence to her master, and was glad to get her supper and a place to lie down in, in return.

She had some half-pence in the little pocket at her side, and she was hastening over the fields to the village, and knew nothing about the Board.

But when she was in the last field, who should get over the stile but the cross-faced man himself, with his stick in his hand!

He called to the little girl that she had no business in his field; but she didn't understand him, so she came nearer and began to dance and to sing "Buy a broom." Poor thing! her feet were tired and sore in her worn shoes, and she danced very badly, and her voice was rough and husky with the evening air, and there was something old and sad in her broad face, and her blue, anxious eyes.

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"Surely he will be kind to her," thought the Board. But no, the man was not sorry for her at all; he threatened her with his stick, and frightened her terribly, so that she ran away, and climbed so hastily over the stile that her half-pence fell out of her pocket and rolled into the grass. Poor little girl, she cried sadly, but she dared not stay to pick them up, though she knew her master would be angry if she brought no money to him at night: so she went away, and the cross man walked over his fields and then went home.

It grew dark, and the Board was left alone in the field; the wind blew and the rain poured down all night, and the poor Board creaked and groaned again in the storm with sorrow and discomfort.

Day after day passed, and the village children never came over the stile again; the blind man was ill and did not wish to walk by the river-side again; the pale child was dead, and soon the daisies grew upon his grave, and the woman sat *there;* the poor broom-girl was far away, perhaps gone home again at last; nobody but the cross man himself walked in the fields, and truly it was no pleasure to see *him.*

"Can *he* gather daisies?" said the vexed Board. "Can *he* sail boats? does *he* care to hear the water sing and ripple along? does it matter to him to get sooner to the village?"

The Board wished heartily he would stay at home.

The autumn was very wet and dismal, and still the Board stood in the field alone; its face looked dim and sorrowful, for there were streaks all through the white letters into the black paint beneath, — they looked just like tears running down.

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At last, — it was in November, — when all the grass was yellow and the wild flowers were dead, the poor Board was so sick at heart and weary of its life, that it begged a stormy Wind to be so good as to lay it down flat in the faded grass.

The blustering Wind liked nothing so well, so with a sudden gust down came the Board face foremost in the nettles growing in the corner of the field; but it did not feel them; it lay quite still and wished for the snow to bury it.

But there was no snow that winter; the children of the village couldn't make snow-balls and pancakes, they couldn't build snow-huts and snow-men, and they wanted a new kind of play in the Christmas holidays.

So they made themselves bows and arrows, and practised with them; and one very fine day they all met for a grand match. There were ten boys who were considered the best shots, and the curly-headed boy was among them. Well, the bows were strung and the arrows ready, but they had forgotten the target: that was very provoking; they could not do without a target.

One of the boys said, he knew what he'd do, he'd soon get a target for them; and away he ran, and when he had looked all around to make sure no one saw him, he jumped over the stile into the cross man's field, and lifted the old Board from the ground. Oh, how it creaked upon the rusty nails when he wrenched it off the post! He carried it away under his arm to his companions, and they nailed it to a tree, and one of them painted it over with broad stripes of green and red and white paint, and the middle they called

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the bull's-eye, and that was black; and they said, whoever shot into *that* should have the prize.

The poor Board was well pleased to be painted with such bright colors, and to see the boys so merry around it: they seemed quite to have forgotten that sorrowful day in spring.

Soon the boys began to shoot; they couldn't wait until the paint was dry — no, that would have been too long — and every time an arrow struck the Board, they jumped and shouted with joy; and when the curly-headed boy shot his arrow off, it hit the bull's-eye: the point of the arrow was full of black paint; the boys shouted "Hurrah, he's won the prize!" and the Board trembled with delight.

It was so pleasant that the curly-headed boy had won. The boys all said the curly-headed boy's cousin must come out and give the prize, and say that he was the best shot: so they ran to fetch her; and though she was a grown-up girl she was very good-natured, and she came out into the shrubbery, and the boys stood round her, and she smiled so sweetly when she gave the prize that all the boys thought her the prettiest girl they had ever seen. She made a long garland of ivy and red leaves, — for there were no flowers then, — and she hung it over the target, and so they were all very happy together.

The cross man walked over his fields that day as usual, and he remarked that the old board was gone out of the grass, and he thought it was high time to order a new one against spring; but when he passed by the shrubbery where the children were playing, and saw how merry they were, and that his own

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daughter had hung the old board with wreaths of gay leaves because it had helped to make them happy, he repented of his purpose, for he loved his gentle daughter even better than his fields. He never put up another "Notice to Trespassers."

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THE MOON.

HAVE you ever looked up to the Moon as she floats in the cloudless sky, and thought that among all the creatures of this busy world she is the loneliest — the only lonely one, in truth?

Tiny insects hum out their joyous lives in myriads — flowers bloom in loving groups — fruit glows in clusters on the interwoven boughs — trees stand in goodly groups, and shield each other from the storm — every bird of the wood, every beast of the field, has his home and his mate — fish swim in glittering shoals, and the great whale is not solitary — the waves of the ocean play together on the sandy beach, or unite their strength to scale the iron rocks — the very stars form little bands and companies upon the face of heaven, and the Twin Stars are known to all; nor is the Sun lonely, for the Earth is his bride; and when he smiles upon her, she answers him with smiles and with songs; and when he turns away his face, she veils herself, and sleeps with his children in her arms until her lord return.

But the gentle Moon has no mate; she moves alone through the heavens, unsupported, unattended, unbeloved. Sometimes a Star comes to her side, and

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journeys with her for a little space; but very soon it leaves her again, for they are not kindred.

But as there is nought in this wide world that exists without loving, the beautiful and tender Moon has given her love to every solitary and every sorrowful heart that seeks her with a loving eye in her homeless wandering through heaven.

The Captive shuts his pained eyes from the glare of the sunshine that mocks him through his prison-bars, but he gladly greets the Moon's soft rays when they fall upon his brow, cool and pure as the waters of a living spring; he listens to her gladly when she speaks to him of freedom to be waited for, not won, and ere she leaves him there is a smile upon his worn cheek that is full of patience and of peace.

It is the Moon that nightly visits the Poet in his little garret-chamber, where she tells him wondrous stories of earth and air and sea — there shows him moving visions of life and love by her own most pure and holy light. She comforts him for the neglect and scorn of the many, who understand him not; and the poet loves her, and sings the praises of truth and beauty with a stronger heart and voice, before all men, in the broad light of day.

It is the Moon that talks with the Lover of his absent love, and bears him her faithful greeting through the silent night. They talk together until the morning, but what they say is for no ears but their own.

It is the Moon that lingers with the soldier at the grave of his fallen comrade. There is a glare of light and a sound of rude revelry from the distant

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camp, but at the grave it is very still. The Moon looks down upon the low hillock, and her beams give a hallowing lustre to the dewdrops on the grass, and to the tears upon the solitary Soldier's cheek. He is not ashamed to weep in the sight of the gentle Moon while he thinks of his dead friend, and remembers the strength of his arm in battle and the tenderness of his heart in love — while he mourns sorely that he is gone. The Moon sings to him in solemn hymns of the world where death can never come, and where he shall one day meet his friend; and the listening soldier's heart is full of faith, and his lips move, and from the depths of his being he breathes a low Amen.

The mother faints not watching her dying child, the husband wearies not by the sick-bed of his wife, but some there are whose task of watching through the long hours of night is not sweetened by love, and to them the visits of the bright Moon are most welcome; she fills the dull sick-room with a pure, refreshing light, and bids the drooping watcher persevere, for duty faithfully performed lacks never its reward; and the tired hands are lifted up with renewed vigor, the heavy eyes brighten, and the sick sufferer is tended faithfully — even tenderly — to the end.

Look upon the face of the broken-hearted, and thou wilt see that with her the gentle Moon has waked for many a night: look at her pale and placid countenance, does she not wane in uncomplaining silence, even as the Moon wanes to a light shadow in the dawning?

If a smile ever tinges that sunken cheek, it is in answer to the low whispering of her nightly visit-

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ant. "I too am lonely — I too am pale and patient; with the dawn we both shall fade away."

Young children know little of the Moon; light of heart and sound of limb, they sleep away the hours when she is abroad upon her loving pilgrimage around the earth. Take a rosy child from his pillow and carry him out into the night, and he will rather make a prize of the first glow-worm at his feet, than raise his eyes to contemplate the full Moon in all her silvery glory, for as yet his desire is all *to have*, not yet *to be* anything.

The bold and fearless boy, whose cheek flushes, whose eye kindles at the approach of danger in the daylight, shrinks with an undefined mysterious fear from venturing alone into the pale moonlight. It is as if there were a presentiment of suffering, as yet unknown, stealing into his beating heart with those quivering beams of light.

Yet was there once a young Child dwelling in the dark and narrow street — a pallid flower was she — that sickness gathered slowly, twining it leaf by leaf into the wreath that is the crown of Death; this little one seeing the full Moon for the first time through the small window-pane, cried aloud joyfully, but with a trembling voice, that God was come!

Sweet was her sleep that night, watched, as she most innocently deemed, by the mild eye of Him who waketh ever while we sleep.

Surely the same beautiful Moon nightly teaches many such lessons of God and heaven to the pale dwellers in the dark, unwholesome streets.

All they who have known sorrow, and suffering, and loneliness, bear witness that this is the Moon's true story.

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THE LAMB.

THERE was once a little Lamb, with curly wool as white as snow, and a little black ring round its neck. You can't think how pretty it was! This little Lamb was in the field with its mother and a great many other sheep and lambs.

The sun was shining brightly, and the sky was very blue; the birds were singing in the trees, and the flowers were out in the fields and hedges, for it was a beautiful morning in May.

The little Lamb felt so happy; it frisked and leaped about, and shook its pretty white ears and its long white tail; it chased the other lambs round the wood that looked so blue with the hyacinths, and over the brook where the cowslips nodded their yellow heads to the tiny flowers that peeped up at them out of the grass.

The Lamb thought it never could be tired of play; but when the sun was high and it grew very hot, because the Breeze was weary of blowing, and had gone to sleep behind the hill, the little Lamb's mother called it and bade it lie down in the grass and rest awhile. Now, though the Lamb loved dearly to lie at its mother's side and rest against her woolly coat,

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it felt sadly vexed to leave its play just then, and very, very slowly, it came at the mother's call, and then stood still a little way off.

The mother could see that it was in a bad temper, so she did not speak to it again.

The little Lamb had run about until it was quite hungry, but instead of going to its mother to be fed, it pretended to eat grass like an old sheep, and went on nibbling away and kneeling down to reach it better, though *really* it couldn't eat a bit.

Presently the pouting little Lamb was going to nip off a little green button among the grass, when a voice cried softly, — "Take care! take care! don't bite off my buds!"

The Lamb stopped to see what it could be, and found it was a Daisy with four little green buds.

"Pray don't bite off my buds just because you are vexed," said the old Daisy again; "they will soon blow into pretty white flowers in the warm sunshine. Pray don't, little Lamb!"

"Very well, I won't," said the Lamb. "I don't want to hurt you. But what is the use when the buds do come out? they can't run about and be merry, they will always have to stay just where they are in the field."

"Oh, yes," said the Daisy; "I know that, of course, but they will be as contented and happy as their sisters were last year: they could have told you some pleasant stories about the sunrise, when the dew-drops look so bright and clear, and about the beautiful rainbow that only comes out in the showers. They were very happy, I can tell you."

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"But could they tell any stories about the night?" said the Lamb. "I like to hear about the night."

"No, no," said the old Daisy; "their stories are not about the night: they shut their eyes and go to sleep when the sun sets, like good, obedient children; there is not one that would peep out after that."

The Lamb began to wonder if the Daisy had seen how naughty it was when its mother called it from play, but it only said, — "I wonder why one must always be obedient! I wonder if *some* things mayn't do just as they like!"

"No, indeed!" said the Daisy, and she looked very grave; "it would not be safe for them at all: but you can go and see for yourself."

"Good by," said the Lamb.

"Good by," said the Daisy, and watched quietly by her little buds; the white petals with rosy tips were just peeping out of the tight green cap. Think how pretty they would be when they were fully blown!

The Lamb went on until it came to a pond in a corner of the field, and there it saw a brood of ducklings swimming about merrily; they were covered with soft, yellow down, for their feathers were not grown yet, and their black eyes sparkled like beads; every now and then they popped down their heads in the water to take a drink, and sometimes they caught flies on the plants that floated in the pond. A Hen was basking in the sun, and dusting herself on the bank close by.

"Oh, I dare say the ducklings may do as they like," said the Lamb: "I dare say they go where they

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please, quite to the other side of the pond. They don't look as if they would mind the old Hen a bit."

Just at that very moment the Hen gave a loud cry to call the ducklings out of the water. Oh, how they scrambled up the bank, and spread their odd little short wings that they might run to her the faster! and how they pressed about her to hide under her strong wings! And well it was for the ducklings that they were so obedient, for there was a hawk high in the air above them, and if one had stayed behind, he would most surely have pounced down and have carried it off in his sharp claws to his nest among the rocks, and there the young hawks would have torn it in pieces and eaten it.

The Lamb couldn't help seeing that it was a good thing to be obedient, and while it stood thinking about it, it heard such a noise of galloping, and neighing, and snorting, in the next field, that it was half frightened; but it soon peeped through a hole in the hedge, and then it saw a young Colt prancing about in great delight. There was nothing else in the field, and the Colt might scamper about till night if he pleased; so the little Lamb thought.

When the Colt caught sight of something white through the gap in the hedge, he came running up to see if it was anything alive, or only a great bunch of hawthorn blossoms.

"What do you want, little Lamb?" said the Colt; and he put his head over the hedge.

"Oh," said the Lamb, "I'm only looking at you, and wondering if you are allowed to gallop about all day long, even when it's hot. Where is your mother?"

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"My mother!" said the Colt. "I used to be with her when I was a little foal, but now I am old and strong I stay in this field by myself, and do as I like."

And the Colt put his head down to the ground, and kicked up his heels in the air and frolicked about.

The Lamb began to think the Daisy only knew about very young things, and thought it would go and tell her about the Colt; but just then a man came into the field with a great whip in his hand. When he cracked the whip the little Lamb quite trembled, it sounded so dreadful.

The man went up to the Colt and caught him, and put a bridle on him and a bit into his mouth (the Lamb did not like to see the iron bit put into his mouth at all), and then he made him gallop round and round in a wide circle, and he taught him to canter and to trot, to stop and go on when he was told, and sometimes he struck him with the whip; and at last, when the exercise was finished, the man patted his neck and said, "You will soon be a useful, obedient horse, I see," and then he went away.

When the man was gone the Lamb pushed its head quite through the hedge, and the Colt came up very slowly and said, "I'm so tired and hot! My mother often told me how it would be when I left her: but I did not mind her then. She said I must be obedient and try to please my master, and then I should be very happy after all."

"Well, and do you mean to try?" said the little Lamb.

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"Yes, of course I do," said the Colt. "Didn't you see how nicely I trotted to-day?"

Now the Lamb thought it was no use going to the Daisy. The Colt went away, and the Lamb drew back its head through the gap.

All this time it had never been to its mother, and now it was ashamed to go; and while it stood hesitating, a large dog came barking into the field: this frightened the poor Lamb terribly, and it ran as fast as it could to the corner where its mother lay in the shade. The good mother started up to her Lamb's side, and facing the dog, she stamped her foot so fiercely on the ground that he soon went off without hurting the trembling Lamb at all.

"Well, so you came back to me when you saw the dog?" said the old Sheep.

"Yes," said the Lamb, and hung down its head. It began to feel very sorry that it had been so cross and naughty, when it saw how kind and brave its mother was in saving it from the dog.

"The sun is gone down," said the old Sheep—"would you like to go and run round the wood again?"

"No, thank you," said the Lamb; "I would rather stay with you — and — I'm very hungry —"

"Why, I thought I saw you eating grass!" said the mother. "Well, I will not say any more, as I see you are sorry for having been so foolish: come, and I will feed you." So the Lamb had some milk for its supper, and then lay down at the mother's side, before the cold dew came upon the grass.

And all the Daisies were asleep in the field, their

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heads hung down and nodded, just as if they were dreaming. Very soon the Lambs, and even the old Sheep, were fast asleep too, but *our* little Lamb couldn't fall asleep for thinking. It looked up to the sky, and saw the bright Stars come out one by one, like little eyes awaking; and it wondered if they knew anything about being obedient: but it could not ask them, they were too far away for that; so it looked down again, and among the grass it saw something so clear and shining — it was a Glow-worm — but the Lamb had never seen one, so it said, "Little star, I'm so glad you are come down, will you tell me about the others up in the sky? May they do as they like, or must they be obedient, as we are?"

"I am only a field-star," said the Glow-worm. "I never was in the sky at all; but I stay out all night in summer, and I can tell you a great deal about the stars. How could you think they are not obedient? They come when they are called, and move as they are bid; they haste away again when the sun awakes and says, 'It is time.' What would you think if you saw the stars in the day-time? — wouldn't it look very strange? And how dark the night would be without them!"

But whilst the Glow-worm was talking the little Lamb grew so sleepy, its head nodded and nodded, till at last it laid itself down among the dewy grass, fast asleep.

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AN ANGEL'S TEARS.

IN those wide azure fields we call the sky, the Angels are wont to meet and greet each other, as they go to and fro on their various missions of love and duty; there they rest awhile upon the beautiful soft clouds, or hold sweet and wise converse as they pass quietly along the blue expanse of heaven.

Little children often look up into the blue sky on a summer's day, and, gazing earnestly, they see the Angels' wings among the fleecy clouds, and their innocent hearts are glad. They call us, and, pointing upward, they try to show us where they are, but we cannot see them!

An Angel flew heavenward with lagging pinions, and when a radiant group of winged spirits received him in the blue depths, and he reclined among them on the rosy-tinted cloud-pillows, they said, —

"Art thou weary, Charis? for thy wings droop."

"I am weary," replied the Angel, "for I come from the earth, the little earth, where men dwell."

And they asked, "Is it sad there? for thy brow is clouded, and thine eyes are so grave."

And Charis said, "It is sad upon the earth, my

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brothers: sorrow and sin make it very sad in an Angel's eyes; yet the earth is very fair."

"How can it be fair, if sorrow and sin deface it? how should *they* have a fair dwelling-place?" asked the Angels.

The gentle Charis answered, "Our Lord has made the earth so fair, lest men forget that *He is, and loves them,* lest sorrow teach them despair, and sin make them mad, and they tear each other and themselves."

"Hast thou no cure for sorrow? no sword for sin?" said one of the Angels, with dark flashing eyes, and a proud majestic bearing.

"Nay," answered Charis, compassionately; "my mission is but to comfort and help the sorrowful, to warn and weep for the sinful of the earth. There is no cure for sorrow while the earth endures, and how should I smite my brethren?"

And when the heaven-born Angels saw tears in the eyes of Charis, they knew that he had once been a dweller upon the earth of which he spoke, for the heaven-born weep not for themselves or others, their eyes are bright and radiant as the unclouded day-beams; but Charis' eyes shone through the tears, soft and tremulous, as the stars shine at night.

"Tell us about the earth," said the Angels, gently; "tell us what has grieved thee, Charis."

"I will tell you what I have seen in one little corner of the earth, in a few short human days and nights; I will tell you whom I have comforted; I will tell you for whom I have wept," said Charis.

"I stood by a cottage hearth, a woman lay upon

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the straw pallet — she had died of fever and famine in the night; her little son slept at her side, and in the gray dawn he awoke and nestled to the pale corpse, and when he felt her so cold and still, and there was no answer to his call, no return to his caress, he fled from the bed affrighted, and ran about the little bare room with wild shrieks, for he understood not the mystery of death. And he cried aloud on his mother, and he struck his forehead heavily in his bewildered fear, and the blood ran down his baby-face, mingling with the tears."

"Do their babes suffer also?" said the Angels, sadly.

"The youngest and the purest, all!" said Charis. "I took him in my arms and hushed him to sleep, then gently laid him down until it should please the Father of Orphans to send him help."

And the Angels said, "Is it better with the rich?"

"Nay, but rather more grievous," said Charis, sorrowfully. "I will tell you. I was in a chamber of a rich man's house; his only little daughter lay upon her silken couch: the pillows were of down, the coverlid was rich, and all about her showed she was well and tenderly cared for; everything looked very different from the poor cottage chamber. But she could not sleep; her long hair was scattered in confusion over the pillow, her slender hands were clenched convulsively; she closed and unclosed her eyes with nervous haste, and there was fear and horror in those timid, large blue eyes; her childish breast heaved with sobs, and the cold dew of agony lay upon her young brow. She thought upon the lessons she re-

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ceived daily from her teachers, the lessons of religion she heard from those who loved her best on earth, and she shuddered before God and before eternity; and her own being was a dark and cruel mystery to her soul, and yet she was but a child — a tender, trustful, gentle child!"

"Didst thou not weep for her?" asked the Angels.

"We weep for the sinful rather," said the gentle Charis; "we have known both sorrow and sin, and sin has the sharper sting. The agonized child left her couch and crept noiselessly on naked feet to the window of her chamber; and there I showed her the calm full moon just risen in a cloudless sky, and myriads of stars in their summer beauty, and the sleeping dewy flowers beneath. I bade her listen, and she heard the nightingale's thrilling song of joy, and the contented whispering of little brooks, and the playful fluttering of the night-air in the blossoming trees: and I said, 'The God who made these made thee also.' And as she looked and listened, a smile came upon her face — the very smile that rested on her lip when, a little infant in the cradle, she heard our voices in the air. And long she stood in the moonlight, listening with heart and ear; she put away the tangled curls from her tear-stained face, and folding her hands, knelt down and prayed most earnestly, 'Our Father which art in heaven;' and when she rose from that midnight cry for love and pity, her countenance shone with a heavenly faith and joy. At peace with God and all the world, and with her own sweet self once more, she lay down upon the bed and slept. Could I weep for her then, my brothers?

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Nay; but I kissed her forehead and her hands, and so gave her the promise and the token that soon she should be one of us for ever."

And the Angels looked out if haply the fair child were already on her way.

And they said, "Didst thou not see one happy child?"

And Charis answered, "I saw one, a very babe upon her mother's knee; her dimpled hand was twined in her young mother's glossy curls; her serious brown eyes were fixed upon her mother's face, and she listened to a gentle voice that spoke in loving words of the beautiful heaven beyond the sky, where happy children live with the holy God and play with never-dying flowers. And the babe crept close to her mother's breast and lisped, in sweet imperfect words, that they would soon go there — very soon; and so she fell asleep, and the father watched them; and was exceeding glad in their beauty and their holy joy.

"But ere it was night the mother parted the hair upon a marble brow, folded the small hands upon a still dead breast, and closed the open eyes for ever from the light; and the father dug a grave for his young child in the dark churchyard, when none might see that he wept."

And the Angels said, "Hadst thou no comfort for the desolate parents in their sudden grief?"

And Charis said, "Surely, my brothers, I stood with them as they laid the baby in her coffin and covered her garments with small gathered flowers, I showed them that upon her brow was written with

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God's own finger, *Everlasting Peace;* and on the still breast, *Perfect Purity;* and in the palms of the little hands, *that no rough sear of earthly work should stain them;* and on the white round feet, *that earth's thorns should never wound them;* and on the sealed eyelids, *that no tear should wet them;* and on the serene lips, *that no cry of pain should pass them;* and they read the lesson with weeping eyes and resigned and thankful hearts. And the blessed spirit of their little child is about them daily in their path and beside their couch in the night-time, leading them lovingly to all that is good and true, even as they would have led their little infant's steps in the green fields to fragrant flowers, in the shady woods where the summer birds sing."

And the Angels said, "They are comforted."

"Their babes are taken suddenly," said Charis, "and the aged are left behind! I have seen an aged woman who for twenty long years had lived alone; her kindred and friends were dead, and twenty years ago she came, a stranger, into the village, and so she remained; she was not very rich, and none sought her; she was not very poor, and none pitied her! Every year she grew more infirm, and at last she could not leave her room or her arm-chair: there she sat all day in summer and winter, and no one came to see her. She could not play with the children nor gossip with the matrons, and the young people never thought of her at all, they were so busy.

"So the old lady sat alone, and at last she never even wished for any one to visit her. She had gay birds in her room that came from beyond the sea,

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and while she looked upon their bright plumage, she did not repine that they were mute; she had vases filled with many-colored flowers that never faded nor needed watering all the year round, and with these she was well content to pass the day: but sometimes the hours went but slowly, and she felt it was a dreary thing to lie whole nights without sleep; but she had no one to complain to.

"I saw her sitting in her arm-chair on a sunny day; the bright rays of the sun fell upon her hair, and showed plainly how white it was — not a single dark one left. It was a village holiday; children were passing by the aged lady's house in their Sunday clothes, carrying garlands in their hands; up to the church they went in a gay procession, and mothers came out at the cottage doors to see it pass, or to put their own little ones into the rank, and steady the heavy flowering branches that swayed to and fro in their weak hands.

"And there were pleasant groups of lookers-on, encouraging the musicians that went before and the straggling children that were the last in the row. The sun shone, the drums and fifes made cheerful music in the street of the little village.

"The solitary lady knew it all. Though her sight was dim, though her ear was dull, her memory had not failed; and she thought of days long gone by, when she was young and gay, and she shook her white head mournfully to the tune of the distant music; and when it became an indistinct, soothing sound in her ear, the aged woman leaned back in her chair and slumbered: her wrinkled hands were folded

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together in her lap, and a single tear had fallen on them ; and she dreamed that she was young again in her father's house, and gave her hand to the friends of her youth, and embraced her sisters, and one that was far dearer than all ; and she was so still in her sleep. I knew when she woke she would find that it was so. I wept not for her, my brothers." And the Angels smiled.

And Charis said, "I have seen a young man lingering out his years in much pain, needing to be served by those whom he would have given his life to serve. I watched him struggling with the spirit of despair that told him his soul was in his own hand, and I whispered to him to wait but a few days and then his trial would be past, and he would have strength as well as will to work for those he loved in a better world.

"I have seen a maiden decked in gold and jewels in the lighted hall, — her sparkling eye and crimson check, her light laughter and her witty words, all but masks to hide the anguish of her heart. I saw her courted, praised, adored ; I heard her envied for her youth, her happiness, her beauty, and her matchless grace. I saw her again in her lonely chamber, pale and drooping, her bright smiles thrown off with her glittering jewels and her silken robe. I knew that she was dying, for the love she had not, when I heard her murmured prayer, 'My God, release me, for my life is all a lie!' I showed her that he whom she loved, and from whom they had parted her, was freed, and that he died loving her ; and with tears of

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thankfulness she bent her head, and promised to endure yet longer, and rebel no more."

"Thou hast taken away her worst pain, sweet Charis," said the Angels: "she knows him true and happy whom she loves better than her own soul; she knows that truth is spoken out in heaven! But for which of all these didst thou so sorely weep?"

And Charis said, "For none of them, but for a rich man who yet was poor, for his heart was empty as his hands were full. The music of hired minstrels sounded ever in his ear, but not one tone of *love;* false, flattering glances daily met his eye, but not one look of *love!* There were none to love the rich man in his unvenerable old age!

"In his solitary yearning he craved even the love of a little child, but his costly toys could not win a child's free heart; it escaped from him to gather wild flowers in the field! Love only winneth love, in earth and heaven; he could not reap what he had never sowed. I wept for the rich man, my brothers; for the rich man who lived without love."

And the Angels said, "Thou wert right, Charis!"

And Charis covered his face and went on his way.

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THE LITTLE WHIRLWIND.

A LITTLE girl once lived in an old country-house with her aunts and her nurse. She was an orphan, and had neither brothers nor sisters, and her aunts took care of her out of charity. No doubt this lone child had been christened by some pretty and softly-sounding name, but she grew up so wild and rough in all her ways, that neighbors, and, at last, the household too, never called her anything but the "Little Whirlwind."

Her staid old aunts lectured by the hour, the old nurse scolded and petted her by turns, but all in vain. The Little Whirlwind heeded none of them; she laughed, and ran away.

Early in the morning she would leave the sleepers in the house and scamper out into the fields, and no hour of meals or of study brought her back until it pleased her own wild will.

Over the hills she rambled, chasing the sheep and lambs before her, through the woods, climbing trees to peep into the squirrel's nest, or rob the wood-pigeon of her two white eggs. In the beds of the mountain streams she clambered from rock to rock, now baring her arm to startle the trout from its still

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watch under the hollowed bank, now dashing the sparkling drops from some tiny waterfall over her bonnetless head. No rock was too steep for her to climb, no wind too rough for her to breast, no sunshine overpowered, no storm wearied or alarmed her.

When she came home at nightfall with torn dress and worn and ragged shoes, with disordered tresses hanging about her neck and shoulders, with sunburnt brow, sparkling eyes, and rosy cheeks, you could not think her beautiful; yet there was something not ungraceful about the Little Whirlwind, in her wayward temper and her agile movements.

If you looked at her you could not but grieve that there was no love in her eye, no gentleness in her smile, nor in the sound of her young voice.

No one loved the Little Whirlwind, for she offended all wantonly, and that day by day. And thus years crept on, and the child grew taller and older, but not a whit less wild.

The old aunts lived very quietly with their sermons and their worsted work, and guests were rare at the old country-house; but now and then it did happen that they were visited by a distant friend or relative, who came into the neighborhood for a few weeks' fishing in the spring, or a few weeks' shooting in the fall of the year.

Among these was a handsome youth, whom the old ladies loved and caressed greatly, as the son of their only brother; and it vexed the Little Whirlwind, for she did not like her young cousin at all — perhaps because he seldom noticed her; and when his aunts called on him to join in their lectures upon her

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conduct and appearance, he smiled in such a very provoking way, and said in a tone of pity, — "It was no wonder she gave so little heed to her good aunts' exhortations, for it was easy to see that she was deaf, and heard nothing of all that was said or went on around her." The first time he said this the Little Whirlwind stared at him as if she thought he was mad. She well knew no ear was so quick as her own to catch the sound of her cousin's foot on the first step of the long stone stairs leading up to her aunts' sitting-room; but, putting a restraint upon her indignation, she answered not a word, and for the rest of his stay she might have been dumb as well as deaf for her tormenting young cousin.

When he left them, and held out his hand to bid the Little Whirlwind farewell, she turned away hastily without accepting the proffered courtesy, for she saw the old smile upon his lips. This was in autumn, and in the following winter she fell sick of a fever, and lay in her bed for many weeks, watched and tended by her old nurse, and duly visited by her aunts. And in the height of the fever she had a strange dream. She thought her cousin was continually deploring her deafness, and excusing her to his aunts in a mocking, malicious tone, that vexed her soul within her. And while she meditated revenge, she thought a most fair and beautiful being came to her bedside. Her robe seemed as if it were woven of sunbeams and of snow, so bright and pure were its graceful folds; her eyes were mild and full of love, blue as the sky in June; her hands and feet were bare, and where she trod little flowers sprang; and

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when she moved there was a low sound of music, whose source you could not see.

This glorious being bent towards the sick girl, and with her slender fingers put aside the thick dark hair, and touched her ear, and it seemed as if the music spoke in words, — "It is true, but henceforth thou shalt hear, my daughter!" The dream faded, and the sick girl awoke refreshed and wondering.

The first time she looked into her glass after her illness she was startled by the pale, pensive face with smoothly-braided hair, that was so very different from the Little Whirlwind she had been used to see pictured in the lakes and streams. For a long time she was very quiet and thoughtful, pondering upon the sweet vision of the fever-night, and wondering if she had indeed received any gift from the touch of those gentle hands. She longed to be out again in her old haunts in hill and vale, and in the spring she left her room; but she went with a changed step, another bearing, listening anxiously if her ears had indeed been opened.

Alas, poor maiden! the voices she heard around her in that first walk were not very cheering. As she crossed the field the Flowers cowered down in the grass, crying, "Hide us! hide us! for the Little Whirlwind is coming! She plucks us up by the roots and tears our petals — she treads us under her feet and leaves us to fade!"

Poor girl! she felt that what the Flowerets said had been too true, and she hastened onward. The Butterflies fluttered quickly from her path, murmuring as they flew, "Fly! fly to the hedge! the Little Whirl-

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wind is coming! She will hunt us down if she sees us! — she will bruise our wings, and stain her hands with the tender down of our bodies! Fly! fly to the hedge! for the Little Whirlwind has no pity!" In the wood the Birds chirped anxiously, "Lie close! lie close in the nest! Make no sound, little nestlings, till the Little Whirlwind be gone by! She will take you from our breast and toy with you a while, then leave you in the sun to perish!"

But the cunning Squirrel skipped in the branches over her head right merrily, and cried, "How pale and still the Little Whirlwind is grown! she will not climb the oak again to rob our nest! How pale and sad she looks to-day!"

Truly she looked very little like a whirlwind when she entered the house on her return; she was rather to be likened to the evening breeze that brings the dew upon its wings, so softened and so tearful was she then.

She could not sleep at night; the walls of her chamber seemed so near they almost choked her: she felt she must go out again to breathe more freely. "Bees, butterflies, and birds will be asleep," said she; "I need not fear their voices in the still night."

So she went out and wandered on until she came to the side of a calm sheet of water, and there she stayed and saw how the moon lay in its clear bosom; the waters played round the silver moon and murmured gentle words. The maiden listened, but she did not understand them; she saw how the waters cradled the smiling moon, and how the moonbeams made the waters a thousand times more fair; but the

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words of their communing she could not follow. She passed into the wood, for there she thought all would be silent in the shadow of the trees; and she saw the honeysuckle throwing her lithe arms around the hazel: she saw the ivy clinging to the oak; and oak, and hazel, and honeysuckle, and every little spray of ivy-leaves, whispered softly and mysteriously together in the quiet night.

"The daylight voices chide me," said the poor girl sorrowfully; "and these, so gentle and so sweet, they do not speak to me at all: it is very, very lonely!" And she covered her head that she might hide her tears, and shut out the sweet voices altogether; and as she wept and heard nothing any more for the sound of her own weeping, an arm stole softly round her, and a familiar voice said in her ear, "Listen in thine heart, sweet Mhyna, and thou wilt know what is in the murmurs of the summer night, and what is in my heart for thee — thee only!"

And the voice of the weeping girl was low and trembling as the sigh of the zephyr in the jessamine-flower, as she leaned her head upon her lover's shoulder and whispered in a word the feeling which dawned in her heart — and the word was "Love."

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THE MEADOW.

THE Husband and Wife were sitting together in a snug little parlor by the fireside, for it was late in autumn, and the afternoon was chilly. The Husband held some papers in his hand, and he showed and explained them to her. They were plans which he had drawn out for enlarging and beautifying the house. He showed her the lofty new rooms, and the veranda, and the pretty greenhouse adjoining. The Wife listened and looked, and admired the plan; but after a pause the Husband said, "We must sell the Meadow by the riverside to do it, for building is expensive."

His Wife looked up quickly from the plans; she said nothing, but the tears stole down her cheek, and the quiet tears disturbed him in his planning; so he rose from his seat and looked out of the window towards the broad Meadow they spoke of. It looked cold and cheerless enough in the dank autumnal fog.

The Wife bent over her sewing again, and after a few moments her Husband threw himself down upon the couch and closed his eyes, and as he began to slumber it seemed to him that his Wife's tears floated before him self-sustained, and mingled strangely together, and there was a voice from the midst of them,

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saying, "We are the children of Memory, and dwell in the secret recesses of the heart, but there are some voices that call us up to the light of day, and thine has summoned us, and we are here, and thou must see what we shall show thee."

And the floating tears were at rest before the Sleeper's eyes, and he looked earnestly into their crystal depths, as into a pure, unsullied mirror; and he saw the broad Meadow in the early days of spring, so fresh and blooming, so cool and green, and a little Child toiling alone the whole long summer morning, gathering the field-flowers into her white pinafore, because she feared the sheep with their nibbling teeth would destroy them; and when she sat down at last to rest, and looking at her rescued treasures found them faded and dead, she wept most bitterly, and her innocent brow wore the cloud of a first sorrow. He knew the Child well, and who it was that found her so and comforted her, carrying her in his arms with gentle caresses until her heart was light again.

And while he mused upon that long-ago, the Child and the lambs disappeared from the Meadow, there was a lock upon the gate, the grass sprung high and thick, birds nested among the rich cool tufts, bees hummed about the blooming flowers, the larks sang songs of ecstasy and love in the blue sky at early morning, gentle breezes played over the feathery blossoms of the hay-grass, mingling their varied hues of purple and pale green in a bright and silvery shimmer beneath the glances of the mid-day sun.

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The field was very beautiful to see. But now it was ripe for harvest, and in the cool of the evening came a band of mowers with their sharp scythes, and soon, bending all together to their work, they laid the tall grass low. Birds and timid field-mice fled to other shelter, and the Meadow was deserted at night-fall, the moon smiling, as it were, in silent pity on the green grass-waves, with their crests of gayly-tinted flowers.

The sun rose brightly on the next day, and with the sun came a motley group of hay-makers with rake and fork, with basket and bottle, to their cheery work in the new-mown Meadow.

There were strong men in the prime of life, and rosy boys and girls, and here and there an ancient gray-haired dame working among them with a grave countenance, as if she felt *that* summer might be the last for her in the merry hay-field. And there were little children too scattered about, some at play, and some playing at work; and it seemed to the Sleeper that many summers must have passed since the little weeping girl cast the dead spring flowers at her feet so passionately, for there was a man walking through the meadow, with a frowning moody brow, that spoke of a soul having no part in the sunshine and merriment around. He strode along greeting neither man nor woman, nor returning the greeting of any, for he had been deceived and injured, and he cursed his fellow-men in his heart.

And so he came to the river-side to be out of hearing of the laughing voices and gay jokes of the hay-makers; and there, half-hid behind the newly-piled

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hay, he saw a little bare-headed boy upon the grass, playing with a shaggy dog; his sturdy sunburnt arms were clasped round the dog's neck, and as he hugged him closer he said, —

"I love thee, Jack; dost thou love me?" The dog wagged his tail, and looked up into his little master's face with speaking eyes: then bending down until his rosy cheek was buried in the dog's rough coat, he said, very reverently, — "*God bless thee, Jack!*" And the heart of the moody man was touched, and he prayed that he might become even as that little child.

And the Sleeper saw how the Meadow was cleared, the full carts drove heavily away, and rattled back again full of romping children; and he saw the boy and his dog running homewards, and watched them on their way.

And when he turned again to the Meadow, the deep hues of the declining summer lay upon the after-grass, and upon the trees and hedges.

And beneath the oak-tree's shade there was a tall and beautiful Girl busied with a little child; she laid it down carefully upon soft shawls and pillows, and sitting down beside it, she gazed lovingly upon the placid little face.

The child was very still, and sometimes closed its eyes in a half slumber; the slender limbs lay languidly extended, the long taper fingers were bent inwards on the veined palm, and the head drooped.

The young Girl gathered the harebells that grew within her reach, and looking at them mournfully, she said, — "As fair as thou, my little sister, and as

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frail;" and bending over her, she laid them round about her, and continued in an under-tone, that seemed half sadness and half love.

"Sleep, Susie, for I am here to watch thee — sleep on, sweet little one, for my mother's words are in my heart, and I love thee very dearly! 'Do not weary of her weight — she will never walk alone,' said my mother ere she left us; 'do not weary of her weight, for the angels will one day ask her at thy hands, and gladly bear her away to God and to me. Though the noon-day sun scorch thee and turn thy young strength to faintness — though the winter's cold numb thy white arms, weary not of her weight, for in summer and winter she has but thee when I am gone. In the solitary day, in the long dark night, weary not of her cry, for the angels hear it with compassion until they hush it for ever with their songs. Thou art but a child in years, yet must thou be a mother to the poor helpless one! God bless thee, my daughter! — God bless thee, and make thy burden light!'

"Oh, Susie, I love thee very, very dearly, and sometimes I think the angels are already near: for there is a strange sweet light in thine eyes, that is not like a smile; and thy moaning is soft and low when thou twinest so close about me in the restless hours of pain; and when thou sleepest I cannot see thee breathe, so very still thou art. How should I weary of thy weight, my sister? Day by day thou art lighter in my arms, and I know not if thou art wasting away, or if the angels' wings already bear thee up."

And the sweet fair-haired Girl sat with folded

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hands and earnest, loving eyes, and waited for her sister's waking.

And years were passed — the Sleeper knew that they were many! The tall Girl was changed, and yet the very same; her form was more womanly, her long bright curls were shaded away from her face, her step had a more measured grace, her glowing cheek was softened to the hue of the wild rose's leaf, and there was even more love in those deep-blue eyes.

She walked in the meadow with one whose face the Sleeper could not see, but knew well. She led him into the shadow of the oak, and told him that her work was done — her little sister in the angels' care — and now she was his, his for ever; and she whispered the holy words of love and faith he had pined so long to hear.

And as they stood with joined hands and hearts in the shadow of the tree, the Sleeper stretched out his arms and cried, "She is mine!" and, waking from his dream, he saw the magic mirror no more, but his Wife's sweet face bending lovingly to his; and when he held her in his arms and kissed her gentle brow, she knew that the broad green Meadow was saved by the tears of memory.

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THE LAPDOGS' HOLIDAY.

TWO beautiful little dogs once lived in a fine large house; there they were washed and combed, and fed with the greatest care; pretty little children, in very wide frocks and tight frilled trousers, nursed and played with them on the soft carpet in the drawing-room, and visitors said, "What charming little dogs!" but some of them trod upon their toes and pushed them away with their feet slyly all the time.

Sometimes the little Lapdogs were allowed to play upon the smooth green lawn when the weather was fine and dry, but they had never been outside the gate at the end of the carriage-drive in all their lives. So they had a great desire to go and see something more of the world than they learned in the drawing-room and on the lawn in sunny weather.

Now it happened that one fine morning the housemaid left the hall-door open while she went into the kitchen, and the two little dogs, seeing it, determined to slip out unperceived and to go as far as ever they could.

On they went, over the lawn to the iron gate, through the bars, across the road, into the fields beyond.

The dew was heavy upon the grass, for it was very

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early, and the little dogs didn't half like the chilly feel of it; but the sun soon shone out stronger, and they began to look about them curiously. They saw the spiders' webs in the grass filled with thousands of tiny dew-pearls, and couldn't think what they were; they wondered to see only daisy buds in the field and no full-blown flowers, for they knew nothing about daisies closing in sleep at night. They heard the lark singing, and the notes were very sweet, but they didn't understand all he said; his song was about being free, and they had never heard about Freedom before.

Well, on they went over many fields, and at last came out by a wooden gate into a pretty lane, and there they lay down, close crouched together, to see what would come past, for they were afraid to go farther still from the house.

The little dogs looked very pretty and gentle as they caressed each other playfully, and licked each other's long silky hair, to smooth it after the wetting it had got in the long grass.

They had not been there very long when they heard a bark in the wood above them, and a sharp, lively bark it was. After awhile a rough Terrier came bouncing towards them; the Lapdogs were astonished, for they had never seen a Terrier before, and they thought all dogs looked like themselves, or like the smooth spotted Carriage-dog that lived in the stable. But when they saw his bright, round eyes, looking kindly out of his hairy face, they felt as if they should like him, and were quite pleased when he came to speak to them at the gate.

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Dogs are not obliged to wait to be introduced, as we are, before we can say "Good morning!"

The Lapdogs soon told their new friend how they had slipped away from the great house. The Terrier laughed, and showed all his white teeth, and actually scampered about with amusement at the idea of its being *far* from the house; but after awhile he settled down a little, and began to tell them about himself.

He told them he came from the Island of Skye, and that his name was Jack. This puzzled the Lapdogs rather. They did not know of such a place, and half-suspected the Terrier was hoaxing them. Then *Jack* was such a queer name, not a bit like theirs — — they were called Fairy and Fidèle — and that had such a very different sound! However, they didn't say anything, and Jack went on to tell them he had been a great traveller.

"What! all by yourself?" cried the Lapdogs.

"No, but with my master," said Jack. "I assure you it is quite pleasant to travel with an intelligent master like mine. I should not think of remaining with any other myself. To travel by rail in a dark box, or to be shut up in a stable when one's master goes out to see the town, is what no dog of spirit would submit to; but my master (he's somewhere in the wood with his book) is really uncommonly attentive to me, and by taking pains he can make out almost everything I say. And I, on my part, am careful not to give him unnecessary trouble, and so we are very good friends usually."

The Lapdogs were quite amazed to hear Jack talk in this off-hand manner, and they began to feel great

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respect for him. They had never heard of dogs making friends of men before; they felt they had never been anything but playthings themselves, and they grew quite serious.

When Jack saw this, he worried them good-humoredly about the neck, and told them to cheer up, and come and take some breakfast with him: he had a capital store of bones in the wood. You may imagine neither Fairy nor Fidèle had ever breakfasted upon old earth-covered bones before; but to-day they were disposed to follow their fortunes boldly, come what might: so they managed to gnaw the bones almost as well as Jack, for the morning air had improved their appetites wonderfully.

When the feast was done, and Jack had buried the rest of the bones, he shook off the earth from his funny hairy face, and lay down on the grass in a cosy spot, with his two little guests, and began to tell them stories about dogs he had known in different places, with sometimes an anecdote of a remarkably faithful and intelligent master.

Jack told them about the Shepherds' Dogs he had seen among the mountains, how clever and useful they were; how active and bold in ranging the wild hills in snow-storm and in mist, saving many a sheep from cruel and lingering death every year; how they knew every lamb in the flock, and would even stay alone on the hill-side watching the sheep, while the shepherd returned to his cottage to dine, or attend to any other business: and that the shepherds valued their dogs more than gold or silver.

This pleased the little Lapdogs very much; but

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they thought rather sorrowfully that they had never done anything half so useful in their lives.

Then Jack told them a story of a large curly black dog he knew, that drew a heavily-laden cart in a town. Every day she walked the same round through the paved streets, whether it rained or snowed, or whether the sun was burning hot, and her master cared but little about her, and gave her many a hard blow, and not many kind words: and Jack said he had a very great friendship for her, she was so patient and worked so hard; and every day, at the hour he knew she would pass, he used to bark and make a terrible noise until his master let him out, and then he ran to the corner of the street to say a few words to her and advise her to run away when she was unyoked at night.

"And did she?" asked the Lapdogs.

"No!" said Jack, and he tore up a mouthful of grass in vexation at the remembrance. "No, she wouldn't hear of it; she said she was so used to her master now, she had been with him so many years, and she thought he would miss her sadly now that he was getting old, and so she was determined to stay, though the yoke galled her poor shoulders sadly."

The Lapdogs thought this was very noble.

"Yes," said Jack; "you may well say so: but it is astonishing what dogs will do for mankind. We find them more companionable than any other creatures not of our own kind, and that makes us put up with a good deal from them."

The little Pet Dogs were not accustomed to such

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reflections, and they began to fear they must be very ignorant, and almost to wish they had been born Terriers, like Jack.

"Tell us something more about your travels," said they after a pause.

So Jack told them he had once gone quite out of the country with his master, and over a piece of water that was too broad to swim across; and that they went in a ship that rocked them about much more than any carriage; and that they were both very sick, but his master the worst.

He told them how they travelled in a new country to see a famous mountain, and how they went to the top of it, which was always covered with snow, and how difficult and dangerous it was for strangers to cross these mountains without guides. "Near the top," said Jack, "we found a comfortable house, which astonished me a good deal at first. When I became acquainted with the men who lived there, I found they were charitable people who devoted themselves, with the help of their sagacious dogs, to saving bewildered travellers who had lost themselves in the snow. They confessed that without the help of the dogs they could do but little. One noble creature had even brought a child, that was too weak to walk, on his back to the convent door."

Fairy and Fidèle thought these must be good men, indeed, and they admired the fine dogs of St. Bernard's not a little.

Jack said, so did he; and that he was sorry to hear since both men and dogs had left the mountain shelter and the bewildered travellers to their fate: he did

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not know why — he had not heard; he thought, perhaps, it might be something about the war; for, of course, it did seem useless for men to spend all their lives among the mists and the snow, for the chance of saving a few lives, when they were so little thought of in the valleys — he said he didn't understand it!

After a pause, which Jack spent in thoughtfully scratching his head with his great rough paw, the little dogs said, — "Do tell us one more story, and then we really must go."

So Jack said, — "I will tell you a story about a cur that I admire more than any dog I know."

"A *cur!*" cried Fairy and Fidèle, both at once: — they thought a cur must be a good-for-nothing, mean, ill-natured dog.

"No," said Jack, "that is a prejudice, as you will see. A poor, decrepit, blind man was one day sitting on a door-step in the street; they had turned him out of his little miserable lodging; he had no friend left in the world, and he wished to die. He said to himself, — 'I cannot beg any more, men are so very hard — I would rather die at once;' and then he let his head fall upon his hands. A little Cur Dog, with an ugly stump of a tail, and badly cropped ears, came to him out of the kennel, and rubbed himself against his legs; but the blind beggar did not notice him. The little Cur sat down beside him, and when he wrung his withered hands, and said, 'I have no friend left! I have no friend left!' he jumped up to him, and licked his hand, as if he would have said, 'Let me be your friend;' and this he did so often, that at last the blind beggar stooped to stroke him, and tears

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rolled down from his blind eyes upon the little bony dog's coat.

"That night the rats couldn't come to nibble the blind man's hair and his tattered clothes, as they had often done before, for the little Cur kept them off as he lay at his new master's feet and warmed them; and every day since he has led him safely through the crowded streets, putting himself between his master and the danger, if there was any; every day he has begged for him from the passers-by, standing upon his hind legs, with a little tin cup in his mouth, most patiently. When his master is ill, he stands in the streets alone, and many a one who does not feel for the poor beggar gives a penny to the faithful little dog!

"When the blind beggar dies, no one will mourn for him, no one will sit upon his grave and wish for him to come back again, except the little Cur Dog, that has been his friend since all the world forsook him."

"Ah, Jack," said one of the Lapdogs, "I am afraid we are very useless creatures! We can do none of the things you have told us about!" And they both hung their heads, and looked quite dejected.

Jack was somewhat amused at the idea of these silky-coated little things drawing heavy weights, saving lost travellers, or supporting blind beggars in the crowded streets; but he was too kind to laugh at their distress;—he told them it was always intended that there should be different kinds of dogs. "The mastiff for the yard, and the spaniel for the drawing-room," said he. "You must always be lapdogs; but

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there are two ways of being a lapdog, — you may be cross-tempered and greedy, noisy and lazy, the plagues of a whole household; or you may be lively and gentle, and pleasant companions to your mistress and the children."

"Oh, yes," said Fairy, "we can do something, I know; we may be good when we're washed — we may be clean when we eat — we may leave off barking at the cat and frightening the canary; we may keep away from particular old ladies and timid children. Don't you think we may do a good deal if we only think about it, Jack?"

"For it's no use wishing to be a Terrier, like you, Jack, or anything but what we are," said Fidèle.

"What's that?" cried Fairy, starting up; and they saw the little frilled children peeping over the gate, — they had come to look for their strayed pets, and were delighted to find them safe.

Jack scampered round them, and pretended to catch them by the frocks and keep them; but they soon found he was not angry, so they took their pets in their arms, and carried them away over the fields to the house again.

And Jack heard them scolding and kissing them all the way as they went.

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THE BIRD OF THE ISLAND.

"I WISH I were a bird!" cried a boy impatiently, as he tossed upon the couch. "I wish I were the bird that sings so beautifully! — listen to him, sister! — instead of lying here sick through all my summer holidays!"

"Hush!" said his sister, gently; "you forget where we are. That bird is not singing in the woods and fields. You do not know his story, or you would take back your hasty wish, my little brother."

"What do you mean by knowing his story?" asked the boy, turning to his sister. She looked up from her work with a grave, affectionate smile, and replied, —

"That Bird once had his home in a fair green island, gleaming upon the bosom of a mountain lake like an emerald upon a sleeping maiden's breast.

"The island was a most peaceful and pleasant spot in the early spring, when larch and hazel, birch, elm, and ash, and even the late golden-leaved oaks, rouse themselves from their long winter rest, and stretch out their fresh-clad branches to greet each other in the balmy air of morning, or bend low at nightfall over the flowers that lean their heads in sleep upon the mossy ground beneath.

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"The shy Rabbit made a path through the mimic forest of bilberries, that spread a wild luxuriance of bright green leaves and pale, red, waxen blossoms over the rocks; small lily-bells, drooping coyly in bowers of honeysuckle and wild rose, made the May-day fragrant with their breath; and golden daffodils, a merry host, nodded saucily to the passing breeze upon the unshaded banks by the water's edge.

"The Stockdove, in the boughs of the elm, cooed softly through half the summer night, and the Cuckoo called his mate on the far hill-side over the still waters, and little birds in the shelter of the island trees sang out their joy in life and love to the brooding mother-birds in their quiet nests. No bird of prey dwelt there; perchance a Hawk might pass, chased by the songsters of the island from their happy home; or the hoot of the Owl be heard as she came out in the moonlight to hunt in the open fields.

"The Bird built his nest year by year in a flowery thorn, close by a bed of lilies on the southern side of the island; there he sang to his mate, and they reared their brood without fear and without danger.

"Sometimes the stealthy oars of the fisherman dipped in the water very near to his hidden nest, but he passed by intent upon his task, with eyes fixed on the long, silver lines, sweeping the rippling water; the Bird, watching him from his leafy home, feared him not, and saw the quick-winged Swallows dart down towards the treacherous flies, and away again with loud twitterings, as if to warn the hungry trout of the snare so cunningly spread for them.

"It was not very often that a human voice or foot-

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step disturbed the quiet of the island, save when an old man walked there with a fair child, or sat in the shadow, holding her in his arms most tenderly, showing her the leaves of the trees and the blossoms of the tiniest flowers in the grass.

"Sometimes the child would dance away from him into the shade of an old yew-tree, that spread out its gloomy boughs in the sunny island, like a frown upon some fair young face. There she would cower down upon the dry leaves and draw the drooping branches over her, and peeping through them with bright smiles, ask, 'Why are there no flowers here? There is not one, and they do grow in the shadow of the oak.'

"And again she was at the old man's side; and she looked like one of the flowerets of which she spoke, as he extended his arms over her, and blessing her, prayed the old Oak might not be suffered to stand when the Flower should be laid low beneath the Yew for ever!

"A whole long summer season! was not that a long life of joy to the Island Bird? And when the Cuckoo was silent and the Corn-crake cried unceasingly that autumn was nigh, though the Bird no longer sang his thrilling song with quivering wings and swelling breast from the tops of the trees, yet he chirped cheerily through the rich time of harvest, surrounded by his full-fledged nestlings; and even in the cold winter lived warmly sheltered and abundantly fed in the quiet island.

"But in an evil hour there came a man to the island who listened to the singing of the birds with

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a selfish and covetous ear, and he laid nets in the night-time, and snared the happy Bird, and carried him in a small dark cage miles and miles away from the beautiful island.

"The Bird's song pleased his captor's ear, and in the hardness of his heart he put out the poor singer's eyes with a red-hot iron, that so in darkness and captivity he might sing, ever and again, with a louder and a sweeter voice, the whole year round. A long, long, dreary year!

"The children of the Fowler sit by the caged Bird and listen to his songs, and when the notes rise clearest, and when they die away most touchingly, they say, 'He is singing about his green island.'

"True, he sings about his whole free, happy life on the beautiful earth; he tells what he has lost, and what man has gained thereby — one little selfish pleasure more. His songs are hymns of praise to God for His loving mercy to the meanest of His creatures; they are sad and solemn remembrancers of man's dark cruelty."

And the Bird's song rose loud and clear, mingling with the low, earnest tones of the girl's voice.

The boy laid his head upon his sister's knee and drew her hand over his eyes. "When I am impatient," said he, softly, "I will think of the blind Island Bird."

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THE STREAM.

HIGH on the mountain, in a cool and lonely spot, where long mosses grow in beauty — where flowers are pale and tiny — where no tree is seen, not even the prickly juniper; far, far from the haunts of men, and near to the stooping clouds, a little Rill welled up into the light; so clear, so pure, so cold from its hidden and mysterious source.

In the stillest night you might scarcely distinguish the whispering of its new-born voice, as it crept softly through the long drooping moss, among the pale and tiny flowers and down the mountain-side.

But as it flowed it grew; for the dew fed it silently in the short light summer night, and it drank of the passing shower and of the wandering mists at early morning and through the autumn day.

And as it grew its voice became clearer and stronger, and merrily it leaped from rock to rock in the rugged bed it seemed so proud to gain; now exulting in its free boundings, and scattering far the cold white spray, now feigning to sleep in quiet pools where foam-bells love to gather; while the pied Wagtail and the Stonechat flitted restlessly from stone to stone, or stayed to drink daintily at the gravelly

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edge, — or a mountain lamb bleated piteously, afraid to ford the shallow wave.

And so the Stream came down the mountain-side, ever with a wilder and a bolder bound, until clearing the last and highest of its rocky barriers, it reached the narrow vale, where small gray cottages peep from the shadow of the sycamore, and the unfenced pastures close upon the Stream.

There are voices of children now mingling with the young voice of the Stream; and a little farther, beneath the hanging alders, the broad, gray stepping-stones fret the smoothly-flowing water. Perhaps a little pouting child stands upon the severed stone, bewildered with looking down upon the running Stream, afraid to venture on, yet ashamed to call for help to the solitary fisherman who throws his line so lightly into the ripple just beyond the alders.

And still the Stream flows on; now the valleys are wider, the fields are broad, and rich with waving corn; the hills draw back, as it were, to gaze upon them from afar, and there are villages upon the mountain-side, and scattered hamlets here and there, in sunny sheltered places.

The course of the Stream is freer, ever freer, and with a deeper, gladder voice it sings a never-ending hymn of joy.

Yet often it lingers lovingly among those beautiful green meadows, and winds itself about them in many a silver link, and lies at rest hushedly in the shadow of leafy trees, and pauses to kiss the feet of flowery hillocks ere it goes upon its gladsome way.

On, on, yet broader and fuller runs the Stream,

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now darkened momently by the arches of the moss-grown bridge, now bright and free again in the open sunshine, now hastening to meet and mingle with another, clear and beautiful as itself, and with it gaining the bosom of the sunlit lake beyond.

The mountain Stream was full of beauty and of power, whether the sunbeams sported with the rippling waves by day, or the moonlight clothed them with strange trembling brightness in the night; whether breathing softest murmurings or raising louder a solemn warning strain.

How often has the voice of giddy laughter ceased, subdued by its grave and measured music; the hasty step and impatient gesture lulled to willing rest by its most tender lullaby; the tearful eye grown clear, gazing upon the clear water; the empty, aching heart been filled with high and lofty thoughts by the inarticulate teaching of the mountain Stream.

Yes, the Stream was a companion to the lonely, a friend to the friendless — a boon of beauty to every creature that beheld it; but there came a dark hour even for the glad mountain Stream.

Clouds gathered on the hill-tops, and in the distant hills there was a mighty storm; the thunder pealed from rock to rock, and resounded solemnly in the valleys; the rain fell in torrents from the angry sky, and every hour swelled and chafed the current of the hurrying Stream; no change in the lowering sky, no pause in the pouring rain; the banks of the Stream are no longer free, the stained waters are out upon the low-lying meadows, a gray and cheerless waste.

Wait but a few days and all will be as of old; the

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sky clear, the wind hushed, and the Stream bright and glad again with its graceful and familiar limits. Thus it has often been, and so will be again.

Alas, no! there were in the valley ears that heard naught in the voice of the Stream but the voice of running water; eyes that marked nothing in its course but the mischief of its overflow; and hearts that knew nothing of a trouble too subtle for any healing save the unboastful ministry of nature; and heads that set to work to devise how the unruly Stream might best be fettered within safe bounds. Must they not care for the hay?

And soon, too soon, hands were at work busily digging a grave for the living River — a long deep grave — and they hemmed the free course of the Stream, and forced the reluctant water from its own true bed into the new straight channel, away from the shady trees, away from the bloomy hillocks, away from its loveliest haunts for ever! And they took pride in their work, for should they not save the hay? But many mourned.

The fettered Stream creeps sullenly, like a captive toiling in his chains; there is no ripple in the moonlight, no sparkling dance in the sultry noon; the trout turns from the dull Stream, for he loves freedom and life, and to leap against the leaping water; and the eel seeks the slow current.

And when a weary foot goes by, when a dim eye looks down, when a sad heart muses by the degraded Stream, what can it now impart? — weariness, dejection, tears!

Years have passed, and yet the imprisoned Stream

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struggles faintly to regain its own loved winding way. If you trace out its old bed, you will find the waters secretly working their way into it again, not freely and joyously, but feebly and silently, as an old blind man might feel his way in the long-left home of his childhood.

And when the storm reigns in the mountains, and the floods are out, how fares it with the prisoner? — how with the hay?

The pent-up waters gush out where their prison is the weakest, and far and wide in straggling rills deface the meadow-lands, covering them with gravel and stones, and many an unsightly thing from their uncongenial bed, spreading disorder and desolation around.

The tale of the mountain Stream is sad, but sadder were the self-same story of a human heart.

Pause, ye who have the power, — pause ere ye forge the chain, ere ye forge the chain, ere ye dig the grave.

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THE DREAMING FLOWERS.

THE windows of the village church were all left open to the uncooled air of the July night, for the eager hands of children had gathered Flowers the livelong day from hill and field, from wood and river-side, from hedge-row and garden-bed, and filled the little grave church with heavy garlands, to deck it for their favorite summer holiday.

The night drew on, and it was very still within the church, and around the wakeful, crowded Flowers; a silent breath of fragrance rose from every leaf and cup, and mingled in an unseen, hovering cloud; but there was no breeze to rock, no dew to feed the thirsty, gathered Flowers, and there was a faintness over them as of coming death.

The Moon looked in, as was her wont, through the arched windows of the little church, and as her white beams rested pitifully upon the leafy garlands and on the flowery groups, they gave to each a dream of life, as it had been beneath the open sky.

The Lily dwells again, an unpretending oval bud, deep in the cool green waters of the mountain tarn, feeling its way so blindly, slowly, surely upward: day and night, storm and calm, go by, as it lives its safe and secret life, striving it knows not whither, until

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the glorious sun receives the perfect flower from the cradling arms of her faithful nurse, and kisses the closed eyelids until they wake to the cloudless azure of the summer day. The expanded Lily floats upon the bright surface of the sun-calmed lake in moveless ecstasy.

The moonbeams glitter upon her spotless, golden breast, and now she softly closes her pure white petals, as it were only to sleep.

The Heath-bell bathes her slender buds in the breeze that blows before the dawn; the dew lies not long upon her spiny branchlets, for her home is open to the rising sun.

The air is full of sounds of wild, fresh songs of early birds, of busy, humming bees, of the bleating calls of wandering lambs, of the voices of happy, truant children.

The noon pours down her blazing beams upon the wide, unshaded moorland, and the glowing heath-flowers bask beneath, a far-spread purple flood.

In the secluded, stony lane the little Strawberry lifts up her simple blossoms on russet slender stem above the threefold-banded leaves; the Wild Brier throws her thorny arches high over her modest hiding-place, and Stinging Nettles keep guard before it; and the new-fledged nestling birds flit aimlessly around, and spare her ripening berries.

The Rose sits graciously upon her shining spray, and inclines her head of soft, translucent white in the balmy, evening air. The Butterfly folds his purple wings, the Ladybird is gone to rest beside her; Doves coo their downy little ones to sleep close by

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the rose-clad bower; and whisperings more soft and low rise from its sheltering shade towards the listening, loving Rose, and one by one her loosened leaves sink from her scented breast.

The elastic Harebell springs from out a rocky cleft, and swings her blue-veined bells in every toying air, or patiently hangs out her green-spiked buds upon their thread-like stems to feel the summer sun.

The Nightshade rears her joyless children in the gloomy, ruined cottage garden; tall, worthless weeds and flowers run to waste, are tangled all around, and the ground she grows in is a heap of stones and pot-sherds thrown up long ago by hands that now are seen no more; the unsunned rain-drops lie heavy on the poisonous leaves, and the young owlets' cry from the rough nesting-place in the deserted cottage is all her lullaby.

The Cotton-grass unfolds her silky banners on the mountain's breast; the antlered Moss creeps up the sunny slope; the Loose-strife by the river's brink reflects her gorgeous purple plumes; the constant Ivy twines around her tree; the Wild Vine throws her untutored, clasping arms about her willing captives, and hangs her clustering grapes on ash or hazel stem.

So every Plant and Flower dreams out its dream in the lingering moonlight. Oh, gentle beams of memory, fall tenderly on every fainting heart!

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THE PLANT IN THE OLD TOOL-HOUSE.

THE old Tool-house was not a very orderly place; the gardener said that the children threw everything into confusion; but they declared that they could find what they wanted well enough, if the gardener would not always "tidy so."

There was not a good light in the Tool-house, for it had only one very small window, and that was often half stuffed up with rubbish; however, when your eyes got used to the half-light, you could manage to find the flower-pot, or trowel, or whatever it might be that was wanted.

The children often ran in when the winter was over, to fetch their gardening tools, or to look for some treasure that had lain there unthought of for months before; but as they were almost always in great haste, they did not notice where a young Plant had put out its tender first leaves, springing up between the flags of the neglected, uneven pavement of the floor. It grew close to the wall behind the door, and so just under the little window. In this cool, twilight spot the Plant grew tall and slender, unfolding leaf after leaf, so pale in color that you could scarcely call it *green*, but fairly formed and graceful, and with a delicate tracery of half-transparent veins.

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The young Plant stood there motionless in the unstirred air, gleaming softly in the faint light from the unglazed window; it knew nothing of the wide, gay world without, and sank to its quiet sleep each night, to wake as peacefully at morn, to shoot its stem, and spread its pallid leaves a little farther. But as it grew taller and stronger more light fell upon it from above; and sometimes even a breath of summer air was wafted in, waking within it a dreamy longing for something sweet and new, which yet it did not understand.

So many days wore out their dusky hours within the walls of the old Tool-house, and from the balmy garden beyond, at times a Bee, less busy or more curious than the rest, came in, still murmuring his noontide song in honor of the flowers; and thus before the solitary Plant arose all faint and shadowy, the images of Lilies and Roses, of sweet shy Violets, and of starry Daisies that look up at the sun.

The Rakes and Spades, and others of the garden tools, were used almost every day and replaced in the Tool-house after work-hours; but there were Watering-cans, and Shears, and Rollers, and many other things that were often left unmoved for days and weeks together, and there was talking and grumbling enough among them when there was no one within hearing. But besides all the above-mentioned articles, there was also a living lodger or two, — a Bat hung up by his hooked claws against the dark wall all the day long, and only left the shelter at nightfall, when he flew out to seek his food in the garden and adjoining fields. Over the window a small brown

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Chrysalis had fixed itself in the autumn, and there it remained far into the spring, showing no sign of life, except now and then a feeble movement at one end of its horny case.

Outside the window, resting upon the thick ivy and honeysuckle stems that clasped the old stones of the Tool-house wall, there was a Robin's nest, and towards the end of May there were young ones in it. As the nestlings grew, they became impatient to fly, and the old Robin and his mate had trouble enough to keep them quiet. When they fluttered and fidgeted, and were in danger of falling out of the nest, the mother tried to soothe and amuse them by telling stories. These stories were mostly about the different kinds of fruit which the young Robins would enjoy when they were old enough to fly in the garden. She told them about the rich round cherries hanging from slender stalks, and about the Crows that came at daybreak to steal them before they were ripe. (Oh, how the young Robins hated those Crows!) She told them about the juicy bunches of red and white currants, and how pleasant it was in hot weather to hop among the leafy branches and peck the ripe and ruddy fruit; she told them about fine arched avenues of raspberries, that bore fruit quite late into the autumn, and how in some seasons there was a little white grub in each. The little Robins never tired of these stories, and always asked a number of questions about them; how large the currants were, and whether they were as red as their mother's breast, and whether nothing could be done about the Crows, and so on. By this means they were pretty

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well amused, but as they grew stronger the mother left them oftener, and then they were placed in the Cock Robin's care. He would perch upon the honeysuckle near the nest (but not so near as to show every one where it was), and then he sang for them.

Did you ever hear a Robin sing? or rather, I mean, did you ever *listen* to a Robin's song? The young Robins listened, but I do not think they understood all his songs, though now and then they would catch the sound and meaning of one of his sweet serious notes, and try it with weak piping voices in the nest.

He sang about the Sunshine breaking through the Cloud; about the Rainbow smiling over the weary, rain-clogged Earth; about the mild, still, hazy autumn days that soothe the September gale to sleep; he sang of the glory of the Dawn after the dark Night; he sang, too, about the crumbs that little children strew upon the ground when it is covered with snow; and about the moist, warm Wind that releases the frozen streams, and unwraps the young buds from their winter swathing-bands.

And because he sang in praise of all these sweet things, and yet had known and felt all the sad and gloomy ones that came before, his song was so cheerful and yet so touching, so contented and yet so plaintive, that none might hear it unmoved, or ponder on it untaught.

The pale Plant in the Tool-house gave little heed to the blithe gossip of the young birds with their mother; but as it listened breathlessly to the melodious songs of the Robin, the desire grew daily

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stronger within it to know something of the beauty and sweetness that dwelt beyond its prison walls. Sometimes it hoped to grow tall enough at least to peep out at the little window, and get a glimpse of all it longed for, but there seemed little chance of that, for the window was still far above it when the August sun was shining. With the shortening days its hope grew fainter, though still new leaves were put forth, and a little more height gained by the slender stem, and still it listened eagerly to every word that was said around about the unknown outer world.

One day at noon the old gardener left his work, put by his tools, and wheeling his Barrow into the Tool-house tilted it up hastily against the wall.

"Why, what is the matter now?" cried a pert-looking, painted Flower-pot, that stood upon the shelf. "That's not like the old master's quiet way!"

The Barrow did not answer at first, for its dignity was hurt at being set aside in such a careless way, so it only gave itself an angry jerk, which brought it down upon its legs in the middle of the floor.

"A horrid life!" it growled out after a while. "I declare, I would as soon stay here altogether as spend the day wheeling up and down, with weeds and stones and all kinds of rubbish to carry — and then no thanks for it!"

"Ah," said the gay Flower-pot, "you're vexed now; you know well enough you have not always dirty work; pray, have you forgotten when you carried the plants to the flower-show? or are Fuchsias and Roses no better than rubbish and dirt?

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The Barrow had by this time recovered its temper, for it was not bad at heart. "Lilies and Fuchsias are well enough," it said, "but I did not remark that any one thought much of me. I dare say master would not have liked to carry the load without my help; but there I was, ready to hand, and no more about it. No; for pleasure there is nothing like having the children to ride; they appreciate me, call me their carriage, and make much of me; the boys put in that little round girl with the long curls, and wheel her up and down the sloping walk, and she claps her hands and cries, 'Faster, faster!' and if there is a turn-over on the grass at last, why so much the merrier!"

The old Barrow seemed as fond of the children as if it had been some old rocking-chair or cradle that had been a nurse all the days of its life.

"Well, for my part," said the Flower-pot, "I am always afraid of those children; whenever they come romping in here, I tremble on this unsteady shelf. Ah, this is no place for china. I only wish I could get a situation in the green-house; it's so genteel, and so safe!"

"*You'll* never get into the green-house, I fancy," said a little croaking voice from the ground, in answer to this somewhat selfish speech. It was the Toad who lived in the green-house, and sometimes made little excursions in the garden for variety.

"And pray why not?" asked the Flower-pot, sharply.

"Because you are not of the right sort," said the Toad, quietly; "the flowers thrive better and look better, too, in the honest old red pottery."

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The Flower-pot said no more, for they all respected the Toad. He was under the gardener's protection, and, indeed, was a bit of a gardener himself; for he kept the green-house, and hot-bed free from noxious and troublesome insects, and so led a very useful and agreeable life.

"You are looking well to-day, Mr. Toad," said the Shears, politely, looking down from the peg, "quite brisk and lively, I declare; and your coat fits you like a glove."

True enough — it was the first day he had worn it, and the Shears would fain have asked what had become of the old one; but even if the Toad had chosen to tell, I rather suspect they would have thought he was hoaxing them; for who *could* believe that the grave little Toad had rolled his old jacket into a ball, and then proceeded to eat it?

"You have a nice easy life of it, Mr. Toad," said the deep voice of the great Garden Roller; "the range of the grounds, and your own choice of weather, while I am left here the best part of my time, and sure to be dragged out when the walks and lawn are in the worst possible condition."

All this talking disturbed the Bat from his sleep; so he shifted his position a little and said, "You all seem very much dissatisfied down there."

"I am not," replied a pretty green Watering-can; "I hope I know my duty better. I am well sheltered here from wind and weather; and in hot summer days I have plenty of cool water from the well, and gentle hands carry me out to the flower-beds; the small drops from my rose fall upon the thirsty

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flowers, like the dew of heaven, and they give me their best fragrance in return. My life is a pleasant and a useful one, and I hope I'm not ungrateful."

An ill-natured Rake, with long iron teeth, whispered aloud, "Useful, but not always pleasant;" and then went on to tell how once the boys had screwed off the rose of their mother's pretty Watering-can, and filled it with gravel, and used it as a rattle to urge the old Donkey into a trot. It told nothing but truth; it saw them set off from the gate. It was annoying enough, but the Watering-can made no reply, and after all nobody laughed.

This grumbling and common-place gossip chimed in but ill with the sweet hopes and dreams awakened by the Robin's songs; and the poor Plant was ready to lose its first fond belief in all the beauty and delight of the unknown garden life.

But it happened during a pause in the talk, that there was a soft rustling and a short struggle within the brown Chrysalis that had lain so long asleep above the little window, and lo! the liberated Butterfly arose, rejoicing in his new-found wings, poised, flew, fluttered in the air, then alighted for a moment on the pale Plant, to close again its outspread, glowing wings; then away through the open door to the smiling, flowery world beyond.

The Bat moved again, for he thought of moths for supper; but as it was not his feeding-time, he left the Butterfly unharmed, and hooked himself more firmly to the wall, and, looking down upon the Plant, he noticed the fragile leaves still trembling from that delicious momentary contact.

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"I see how it is," said the Bat; "quiet as you look, you are no more content than the rest: the Robin has turned your head with his songs about sunshine, and breeze, and all the rest of it. But just listen to reason: *I* am free to choose, and I would not give a couple of Beetles for them all."

This sounded harshly to the poor Plant; but its thoughts were following the beautiful, the happy Butterfly.

"Oh! sweet and fair must be the flowers that feed and cradle thee, lovely, perfect creature!" sighed the Plant; and for the first time it felt with mournful bitterness that it had borne no summer flower, and might hope no autumn seed.

The Bat meant no unkindness, but he was not gifted with a taste for the beautiful, nor with the tact that spares the feelings of another; so he went on: "If you don't believe me, ask some of your own people;" and he nodded over to the other side of the house, where the Irish Ivy had crept in through the eaves, and hung in forlorn streamers with pale and sickly leaves. "Ask the Ivy; if the garden is so charming, why does it press in here?"

"Alas!" said the Ivy, sorrowfully, "we have no choice; we are unhappy exiles from the sun and sky; we come of a countless, still-increasing family, and the weak must ever give way to the strong; our happier brethren flourish freely in the open, blessed air of heaven; their vigorous boughs have built a never-fading tower of beauty and of strength; while we, born to cling and climb like them, are forced to hang our weary hands to the ground within these gloomy

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walls, where is nor sun, nor breeze, nor dew to make our lives worth living; and yet we live."

The Plant looked up compassionately at the spiritless Ivy; and when it saw that here and there the sprays had intertwined to support and uphold each other a little longer from the dull ground, it felt a sorrowful sense of its own inactive loneliness.

There was a long silence, for the Bat had fallen asleep again; and then a glad voice was borne in upon them by the breeze: "Yes, it is beautiful beneath the sky — very beautiful!" It was a voice from a young and stately Tree, in the full luxuriance of its summer foliage. "It is sweet to be glad with the breezes of spring, that toy with the young leaves, and awaken the rosy-streaked buds from their sleep, and to watch the sunbeam slide down the bough to lure the full blossoms away. It is sweet to stretch forth our arms to the summer noon, when the earth seems at rest, though fulness of life is around. It is sweet and strange to watch the path of the silver moon in the cloud-encumbered sky. It is wild and fair, in the waning year, to bow and bend in a yielding strife with the mighty gale, and scatter the red and golden leaf as willing gifts to our mother Earth. It is a pure and home-delight to lie still and safe beneath the snow, to nurse the germs that shall be the grace and delight of the coming spring. Yes, it is beautiful beneath the sky — very beautiful!"

The voice ceased, and it was very still in the old Tool-house. Many quiet, ever-shortening days went by, and nothing came to cheer the poor Plant amid its unavailing longing for the free life beneath the sky.

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One sunny, blue September noon, the children were busy in the garden. "Oh! do go and find a bit of string!" said the eldest boy to the little sister, who always did his bidding willingly. "Run away to the Tool-house; you'll find some there, I'm sure."

The little girl made no delay; she searched all about the place, and tried to peep up on the shelf by standing on tip-toe, though she was much too short for that; she looked under pieces of bass-mat, and at last even behind the door.

She found no string there, but her eye fell upon the tall, pale Plant, and she wondered to see it there, and stayed to look at it until she heard her brother calling her; then she ran back quickly, crying, "Oh, there is such a tall Plant growing in the Tool-house! Do come and see!"

"Have you brought the string?" asked the boys.

"Oh, no, I couldn't find any," said the little sister; "but *do* come and see the Plant. It is growing in the corner behind the door; its white leaves looked just like a little light when I looked in!"

But the boys would not go; they found some string, and went on with their work, and very soon the little gentle girl stole away to look again at the solitary Plant.

She thought of the bright light and pleasant air outside, when she stood again in the dark Tool-house, and she felt sorry that the pretty Plant should grow there all alone, as she thought how cheerful it was in her own sunny garden, where so many flowers stood together. She wondered if the Plant was sick, or why its leaves were so pale, and at last she thought

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she would dig it up, and plant it carefully outside. She easily took it up, and carried it away to her own garden-plot.

And all that night it was a secret joy to her to think of visiting her happy Plant in the bright sunshine "to-morrow morning."

But when the lessons were over, and the hopeful child ran out, she found the pallid leaves shrunk, and the tender head hanging down; the Plant looked paler and sadder than it did in the dark corner where she found it.

She was standing there with large tears in her disappointed eyes when her mother and brothers joined her.

"What is it?" said the boys.

"My poor Plant!" said the child; "I brought it out into the sun, and now it is not glad at all!"

"It is dying," said the younger boy; and the little girl began to weep.

"Oh! but you are always so sorry about everything," said the boy, awkwardly, for he did not like to see her tears, though he knew not how to comfort her.

The cousin of the children, who was there also, came to look at the wan Plant, and said, "Ah, yes! I see — the coloring matter in plants is dependent" — and here he stooped to break off the drooping head, with its crown of fading leaves, to illustrate his lecture; but the little girl spread out her hands to guard it, and said, reproachfully, "You shall not hurt it; do you not see that it will die?" and she wept more bitterly than before.

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The mother of the children was a gentle lady, with a face that was full of thought and goodness; she looked like one who had suffered, and now hoped, but for something that was as yet far off. She took her little daughter's hand and said, "Do not grieve too much for the poor Plant and its lonely, sunless life; the fading leaves must fall, the exhausted root must rest in earth through the still winter: but with a new spring it will revive, and put forth leaves and blossoms, and ripen perfect seed."

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